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### Culturally Collaborative Teaching: A Path Toward Black Student Learning

J. Love Benton

*Antioch University - PhD Program in Leadership and Change*

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**CULTURALLY COLLABORATIVE TEACHING: A PATH TOWARD BLACK  
STUDENT LEARNING**

A Dissertation

Presented to the Faculty of  
Graduate School of Leadership & Change  
Antioch University

In partial fulfillment for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

by

J. Love Benton

ORCID Scholar No. 0000-002-4499-5770

November 2020

**CULTURALLY COLLABORATIVE TEACHING: A PATH TOWARD BLACK  
STUDENT LEARNING**

This dissertation, by J. Love Benton, has  
Been approved by the committee members signed below  
Who recommend that it be accepted by the faculty of the  
Graduate School of Leadership & Change  
Antioch University  
in partial fulfillment of requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

Dissertation Committee:

Donna Ladkin, PhD, Chairperson

Lize (A. E.) Booysen, DBL

Elmar Kutsch, PhD

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## **ABSTRACT**

### **CULTURALLY COLLABORATIVE TEACHING: A PATH TOWARD BLACK STUDENT LEARNING**

J. Love Benton

Graduate School of Leadership & Change

Antioch University

Inservice teachers' influence and power are vital components for academic success among Black children. Previous research has shown that when teacher/student interactions are culturally responsive, engaging, and equitable, student learning is positively impacted (Banks, 2001; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Sleeter, 2000; Warren, 2018). However, equity gaps between Black and White k-12 students continue to exist within classroom settings (Grant & Sleeter, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 2018). Using a mixed-method approach that includes Repertory Grid Technique underpinned by Personal Construct theory to identify the teaching perceptions of inservice teachers, I gathered data that indicate how k-12 teachers understand what enables Black students to learn. The findings reveal that respondents shared five key constructs as being important to Black students' learning: "professional and skills development," "impacts of administrative responsiveness and supports," "caring," "trust," and "inclusion of lived experiences." However, what is important to note is that my study indicates that neither Black nor White teachers held the entire picture of what enables Black students to learn. By integrating the results of both Black and White teachers' responses, I theorize a framework which represents a path for Black student learning. I call this framework Culturally Collaborative Teaching, which takes into account both Black and White teachers' understandings of what the critical factors are when educating Black students. Culturally Collaborative teaching is a framework in which

teachers, regardless of their race and cultural background, can integrate and develop a shared set of skills and values. The inclusion of administrator support and understanding of cultural practices, serves as the foundation for positively impacting academic learning for Black students.

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*Keywords:* Black students, Culturally Collaborative Teaching, culturally relevant pedagogy, equitable education, inservice teachers' beliefs, k-12 public education, leadership, personal construct theory, professional development, repertory grid technique

## **Dedication**

With God all things are possible! This dissertation would not have been completed without God's grace and love.

To my wife, Jackie Jones, who stood by me and supported me through the highs and the lows, I am forever grateful. I love you through infinity.

To my SonShine, Elijah Malik Benton, this work is for you! You are the greatest gift of my life. I started this journey so that I would be in position to teach those who may teach you during your educational career. As my doctoral journey comes to an end, one of my first college students is now your third-grade teacher. I know that because your current teacher had me as their professor, you, as a Black male child, will have an equitable and antiracist educational 3<sup>rd</sup> grade experience. You are my reason why and my legacy! I love you to the Moon and Back!

To my daughter, Baiyina Jones and Son, Rahim Jones, thank you for your support and love. Continue to live out your dreams and passions. And always reach for beyond the stars. I love you both.

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To all of the Black students across America, I hope that this body of work facilitates in you experiencing equitable education as you matriculate through k-12 education systems.



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## Table of Contents

Abstract .....	iv
Dedication .....	vi
Acknowledgments .....	viii
List of Tables .....	xiii
List of Figures .....	xiv
Chapter I: Introduction.....	1
Researcher's Background.....	2
Methodological Approach .....	8
Favorable Pedagogical Methods for Black Students.....	9
Barriers to Pedagogical Methods for Black Students.....	11
Organization of Remaining Thesis.....	13
Chapter II: Literature Review .....	15
History of Cultural Pedagogical Methods and Teaching Practices .....	16
The Role of Culture in K-12 Education .....	20
Pedagogical Methods and Strategies for Black Students .....	22
<i>Multicultural Education</i> .....	22
<i>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy</i> .....	24
<i>Culturally Responsive Teaching</i> .....	25
<i>Engaged Pedagogy</i> .....	27
Pre-service Knowledge to In-service Dilemma .....	29
Barriers Impacting In-service Teachers .....	30
<i>Standard Based Education and Compulsory Testing</i> .....	34
<i>Lack of Professional Development</i> .....	38
<i>Teachers' Self-Efficacy</i> .....	39

<i>Racism</i> .....	41
Summary .....	43
Chapter III: Methodology .....	46
Research Paradigm .....	46
Methodological Approach .....	48
Personal Construct Theory .....	50
Repertory Grid Technique .....	54
Validity and Reliability of the Study .....	57
Research Design .....	58
<i>Sample Size</i> .....	58
<i>Sample Population</i> .....	59
<i>Age and Average Years of Teaching</i> .....	59
<i>Grades Taught</i> .....	61
<i>Sample Recruitment</i> .....	61
Elements .....	61
Selection of Elements .....	63
Interview Process .....	64
<i>Repertory Grid Protocol</i> .....	66
<i>Ethical Protections</i> .....	66
<i>Repertory Grid Question and Triad Presentations</i> .....	67
<i>Rating of the Repertory Grid</i> .....	70
Summary .....	71
Chapter IV: Analysis and Results .....	73
Data Collection and Validation .....	73
Analysis of Repertory Grid Data .....	74

Core-Categorization Procedure .....	75
<i>Reduction of Constructs</i> .....	77
<i>Frequency Analysis</i> .....	83
<i>Average Normal Variability Analysis</i> .....	89
<i>Preference Analysis</i> .....	97
Analysis of Two Sub Samples .....	101
<i>Frequency Analysis of Sub Sample</i> .....	102
<i>Average Normalized Variability Analysis of Sub Sample</i> .....	104
<i>Preference Analysis of Sub Sample</i> .....	113
Summary .....	116
Chapter V: Discussion of Findings .....	118
Shared Key Constructs Significance .....	122
<i>Construct “Caring”</i> .....	123
<i>Construct “Trust”</i> .....	125
<i>Construct “Teacher Inclusion of Lived Experiences”</i> .....	126
Implications for Teacher/Student Relationships .....	129
<i>Construct “Professional and Skills Development of Staff”</i> .....	133
<i>Construct “Impacts of Administrative Responsiveness and Supports”</i> .....	136
Key Constructs Individually Important to Black In-service Teachers .....	140
<i>Black Respondent Key Construct “Effects of Teacher Expectations on Student Responsiveness”</i> .....	140
<i>Black Respondent Key Construct “Parental Responsibility and Active Involvement”</i> .....	142
Summary .....	142
Key Constructs Important to White In-service Teachers .....	143
<i>White Respondent Key Construct “Cultural Knowledge and Competence in Teaching Diverse Students”</i> .....	143

<i>White Respondent Key Construct “Immediate and Extended Family Relationships”</i> .....	144
<i>White Respondent Key Constructs “Academic Engagement” and “Teacher High Academic Expectations”</i> .....	146
Summary .....	147
Implications of In-service Teachers Beliefs About Black Student Learning .....	149
Discussion .....	153
<i>Implications for Professional Development</i> .....	155
<i>Connecting Shared Key Constructs with Collaboration Efforts</i> .....	155
<i>Theoretical Contribution</i> .....	159
<i>Practical Contribution</i> .....	160
Limitations of This Study .....	161
Conclusion .....	161
Closing Reflections .....	162
References .....	165
Appendix A: Marketing for Research Study .....	174
Appendix B: Repertory Grid Protocol - Inservice Teachers .....	175
Appendix C: Repertory Grid Interview Protocol .....	176
Appendix D: Informed Consent Form for Research Study .....	178
Appendix E: Assessing Reliability .....	182

## List of Tables

Table 2.1 Cultural Pedagogical Theories and Practices.....	18
Table 2.2 In-service Teachers Barriers to Implementing Cultural Pedagogical Knowledge .....	32
Table 3.1 Age Range and Average Years of Teaching of Black Teachers.....	60
Table 3.2 Age Range and Average Years of Teaching of White Teachers .....	60
Table 3.3 Presentation of Elements .....	64
Table 4.1 Initial Primary Categories/Constructs.....	77
Table 4.2 Primary Category/Common Constructs and Construct Poles and Definitions .....	81
Table 4.3 Primary Common Constructs Frequency Table.....	92
Table 4.4 Summary of Key Constructs with Construct-Pole Pairs and Preference.....	98
Table 4.5 Key Constructs for Black and White In-service Teachers.....	104
Table 4.6 Summary of Overall, Unique Frequency, and Average Normal Variability for Black and White In-service Teachers.....	108
Table 4.7 Summary of Key Constructs and Pole Preference for Each Sub Sample .....	114
Table 5.1 Key Constructs Confirmed in Existing Literature .....	151

## List of Figures

Figure 3.1 Example Repertory Grid.....	69
Figure 3.2 Example of a Respondent's Repertory Grid.....	71
Figure 4.1 Core-Categorization Procedure .....	76
Figure 4.2 Example Grid of a Respondent with Common Constructs .....	85
Figure 4.3 Overall and Unique Frequency .....	87
Figure 4.4 Percentage of Unique Frequency of Key Constructs .....	91
Figure 4.5 Bipolar Representation of Key Constructs and Respondents Preferences .....	100
Figure 4.6 Most Frequent Common Constructs Unique Frequency .....	103
Figure 4.7 Combination of Black and White Teachers Unique Frequency and Average Normal Variability (ANV).....	106
Figure 5.1 Illustration of Key Constructs and Level of Importance Based on Unique Frequency and Average Normal Variability Among Subsamples and Total Data Set.....	121
Figure 5.2 Gateways That Impact Relationships with Black Students .....	131
Figure 5.3 Respondents' Key Constructs and Their Preferred Pole Percentage.....	148
Figure 5.4 A Path Toward Culturally Collaborative Teaching.....	158

## **Chapter I: Introduction**

Teachers are important to students' learning, academic achievement, and human development. Gay (2010) discussed the importance and impact that teachers have as a factor for students' success. It is true that teachers work hard and have long hours focusing on their content knowledge and pedagogy, yet, as Gay (2010) alluded, their ability to work with students from various backgrounds is often low and met with low academic achievement. Ladson-Billings (2001) reported that "Although 70 percent of new teachers initially say that their programs did a good or excellent job of preparing them for the classroom, 60 percent believe that most new teachers assume responsibility for their classroom without the necessary experience in managing them" (p. 8). Teachers' capacity to connect with, relate to, and engage Black students to increase learning continues to be of concern. Teacher education programs that largely focus on theory become problematic as preservice teachers (students in teacher education programs) transition to in-service (current k-12 teachers) teachers. Ladson-Billings (2001) found, "More than half of new teachers feel their teacher education program focused too much on theory and not enough on the practical aspects of teaching" (p. 8). This finding affirms the need to emphasize understanding of how in-service teachers think about teacher effectiveness and what contributes to Black students' learning. Examining teacher effectiveness and teacher experiences with a cultural lens focus benefits Black student's academic progress and growth in public schools (Ladson-Billings, 2018).

Cultural pedagogy has been taught to preservice teachers for years. However, Warren (2018) asserted, "helping teacher candidates conceptualize and translate themes of this research into practice is a persistent challenge in teacher education" (p. 170). Lead researchers have acknowledged this lack of practice for numerous years (e.g., Gay, 2000; hooks, 1994;



Ladson-Billings, 2009). Gay (1989) echoed this concern in earlier work when stating, “K-12 teacher preparation programs leave graduates knowing little about the cultural traits, behaviors, values, and attitudes different ethnic minority groups bring to the classroom” (p. 182). Despite the concern voiced throughout the education field, the general structure of most training programs' curriculum remains insufficiently informed by individual factors such as race, gender, and cultural norms (Sleeter, 2012). This persistent lack of adequate training is exacerbated by post-licensure training. Through professional development efforts and understandings of in-service teachers' thoughts and beliefs about teaching experiences, in-service teachers can enhance and improve their knowledge about teaching and learning in educational settings that serve a majority of Black students.

This study aims to answer the following research questions:

*RQ 1: What do k-12 in-service teachers deem to be important while teaching Black students in an urban school setting?*

*RQ 2: In what ways do Black and White teachers think the same and differently about what contributes to Black students' learning?*

By answering these questions, I intend to identify beliefs that in-service teachers have about what they feel is important for Black students to learn in urban classroom environments. In this chapter, I will connect my background with my overall research questions and introduce the problem and method chosen that is best to investigate the research problem.

### **Researcher's Background**

Educational equity is important to me as a Black teacher and mother of a Black boy. Teacher/student interactions can have positive or negative effects on students. Depending on teacher/student interactions, students' academic achievement, level of engagement, and

classroom behavior could be impacted (Ladson-Billings, 2011). I have worked in several school districts where teacher-student interactions were both positive and negative. Some teachers I have worked with have little knowledge of the culture and background of the students they teach. Nevertheless, all students are mandated to take the same standardized tests, are measured by the exact same behavior codes, and engage in the classroom the same, with little to no regard of their cultural, social, emotional, or academic needs (Ladson-Billings, 2011; Warren, 2018). In my experience, teachers are mandated to teach toward test performance and not towards student engagement and learning because of required state and national testing.

In each of the districts that I have worked, students have had different access to learning tools, and in some cases, the districts did not offer the basic tools that are needed for academic growth and success. Some examples of inequitable practices at schools that affect Black students include higher suspension rates, higher discipline reports, lower academic achievement, ineffective teaching, and little to no diversity of teachers. Inequities affect student success and their academic growth widening the educational gap between Black and White students (English, 2016; Sleeter, 2012; Warren, 2018). As an educator, I believe inequitable education and the lack of professional development alignment to improve teachers' social beliefs and skills are key factors as to why Black students achieve less in America. Equitable education cannot be obtained without raising self-efficacy, social beliefs, and abilities of teachers to engage all students (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Howard & Terry, 2011). The aforementioned requires an in-depth look at the personal thoughts and beliefs of teachers about their teaching experiences to better understand teachers' actions in educational settings. Existing literature addresses in-service teachers' actions and preservice teachers' beliefs about pedagogical theory; however, an in-depth examination of

in-service teachers' belief about Black students and what they believe is needed for Black students to learn has yet to be addressed.

I have been an English teacher for middle and high school students over the last 13 years, and I have frequently witnessed cultural disparity as it relates to teaching and learning. Many of the disparities happen on a micro level among fellow teachers that I work within Ohio school districts. During staff and content area meetings, for instance, teachers highlight the minority students that cause trouble, are not excelling, and are not engaged in the classroom learning. Many conversations are around student academic data, and very little is said that would incorporate the students' background or culture that could be influencing their learning, achievement, behavior, or engagement. The students' lived experiences are rarely mentioned, and the focus is usually centered on test scores, attendance, and behavior. When the student is White, the conversation leans more toward seeing what support can be given to them or even switching classes to a teacher that they may fit better within a certain discipline. When the student is Black or another minority, the conversation is centered on their behavior and their attendance, often looking toward other schools for them to attend.

Although this has been my personal experience as a k-12 in-service teacher, recent data support this. In 2014, the Kirwan Institute began its assessment of barriers to high-quality education through a series of reports that examined racialized discipline disparities in Ohio's public schools from 2005–06 to 2012–13. The results were striking, especially for Black males. The research was conducted on implicit bias in Ohio schools and how it relates to discipline disparities and the school-to-prison pipeline phenomena. Black students in Ohio were disproportionately susceptible to receiving excessive responses to perceived misbehavior (Staats, 2014; Wright, 2016). I have personal experience of just such occurrences in practice. For

instance, during my 2017–2018 school year as an English teacher, a White student was taunting a Black student in the hall. The White student lunged at the Black student, but when the school officer came, she immediately went for the Black student. She refused to hear him out even when other students were trying to tell her what happened. He ended up having to serve an in-school suspension because she felt he was insubordinate to her demands.

Most of the theory I have read that focuses on multicultural education or culturally responsive pedagogy centers on preservice teachers that has yet to have practical experience in educational settings. As an adjunct professor teaching preservice teachers, this has also been my experience. In many cases, textbooks that are assigned to the class focus on theory and very little practicality. My college classrooms are filled with a majority of White young women who have desires to work in public education. Most of them come from suburban and private educational settings with little diversity. As diversity continues to rise in our nation, k-12 in-service teachers need to be prepared to deal with the influx of Black students whose culture and lived experiences influence their academics daily. Teachers' focus on high stakes test can undermine Black students' needs in educational settings. High stakes testing encourages a system built on competition. Competition within educational settings can lead to racial inequities that affect Black students' ability to perform successfully (Dixson & Anderson, 2018). This competition system is steeped in what Paulo Freire referred to as the pedagogy of the oppressed. This pedagogical theory is rooted in Freire's lived experiences and led to his radical rejection of a class-based society (Freire, 1970). Systems focused solely on classism, competition, and racism led to scholars redefining educational measures for marginalized and Black students. Thus, pedagogical research that focused on culture emerged.

Culturally relevant pedagogy encourages teachers to focus on students' cultural awareness and social activism additionally. At its core, "a culturally relevant pedagogy is designed to problematize teaching and encourage teachers to ask about the nature of student-teacher relationships, the curriculum, schooling, and society" (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 483). As mentioned earlier, the exclusion of culturally relevant pedagogy can lead to negative teacher/student interactions and gaps in equity and student engagement.

While the focus has been mainly on preparing preservice teachers, it is k-12 in-service teachers that need tools and professional development to raise their self-efficacy and ability to work with Black children. As a current high school educator, I am the only Black teacher in my building, and our school does not focus on and hardly mentions cultural relevance in our curriculum and teaching. Throughout many districts that teach Black students, most of the teachers are White, who have little desire to add engaged or cultural pedagogy to the curriculum. Teacher demographics show that 81.9 % of all public-school teachers are Caucasian, non-Hispanic, and of those, 76.3% are female. More recently, the U.S. Department of Education reported that about 80% of preservice teachers are White, even though White students are less than half of the k-12 population (U.S. Department of Education, 2015).

Within schools I have worked, there has been no mandate or school focus for teachers to include culture, race, gender, and lived experiences in the classroom. The focus of districts that I have worked in has been about standard-based education and student achievement aligned with standardized tests. Teacher preparation programs have a component of multicultural education that is taught to k-12 preservice teachers, but the theory does not translate into practice. Sleeter (2016b) posited that a "White teaching force in programs that have added multicultural or social justice content, who then teach in schools that emphasize raising test scores, does not

significantly alter the deficit lens teachers use to understand their students” (p. 156). In my experience, Sleeter’s (2016b) statement holds true and White teachers that I have worked with typically do not connect with, relate to, nor engage with Black students. The process of teaching students from this mindset is vastly different from the traditional systematic learning that is presented today to align with standards-based education.

hooks (1994) asserted that teachers who inspire her are teachers that have “the courage to transgress those boundaries that would confine each pupil to a rote, assembly-line approach to learning” (p. 13). As a teacher myself, I often rely on the courage to teach outside the lines of Standard Based Education (SBE) and push students to lean into the educational curriculum with me by bringing our whole selves into the classroom. Over the years, this educational philosophy has yielded high academic results in my classes. In the 2018/19 school year, 78.4% of my freshmen classes passed the standardized English 1 test; my Black students passed at a rate of 89%, comparatively. Compared to other classrooms, Black students in my class had high attendance throughout the entire school year. Many of the students became student leaders and increased their level of engagement and participation, not only in my class but in the school as a whole. The potential to positively impact Black high school students, assisting in the formation of habitual engagement and leadership, is by itself reason enough to pinpoint the critical factors for successfully teaching Black students. In addition to the potential for a shift in Black student academic success, this ability to positively impact Black students’ futures illustrates a glaring need for a study that focuses on bringing the aforementioned theory into current classrooms by first examining in-service teachers’ beliefs about Black students.

Understanding what in-service teachers think about teaching Black students is vital for the success of Black students. Irvine (2003) suggested “To be effective in today’s diverse

schools, teachers must be culturally sensitive, and have a sense of identity with their students” (p. xi). Investigating in-service teachers’ personal constructs and beliefs will offer an understanding of teachers’ reasoning for daily classroom activities, behaviors, and interactions with k-12 students.

### **Methodological Approach**

Personal Construct Theory (PCT) and Repertory Grid Technique (RepGrid) technique are useful in aggregating qualitative and quantitative data pertaining to teaching patterns of k-12 in-service teachers. This methodological approach could uncover teaching patterns based on in-service teachers’ beliefs on what enables Black students to learn. Banks (2001a) asserted that teachers who believe that race and culture are not factors in the academic success of Black students embrace “an assimilationist ideology,” that is steeped in the idea that if a teacher is considered a good teacher, they can be effective with all types of students regardless of race, ethnicity, and social class, (p. 118). As research has been theorized and studied among preservice teachers, it has yet to become prevalent and practiced among in-service teachers. It is because of this notion that a study looking solely at in-service teachers working with Black children is imperative.

By exploring preservice theories of multicultural education, culturally responsive pedagogy, and engaged pedagogy, and the barriers that impede teachers’ capacity to teach k-12 Black students effectively, I am hoping to understand what existing research suggests are favorable factors and barriers for teachers when teaching Black students. The need for this empirical study arises from the gap in knowledge of theoretical alignment with actual teacher experiences and perspectives. While the current literature has identified factors that may

significantly impact teacher-student interactions and outcomes, it hungers for this insight into teachers' practical mindsets and learned preferences inside these multicultural settings.

### **Favorable Pedagogical Methods for Black Students**

James Banks created Multicultural Education (ME) in order to address the inequalities that were present in US public schools during the 70s. Banks focused on the systematic structure that perpetuated and reinforced racism in public school settings. Through his research, Banks contended that high-quality education for ethnically diverse students was essential to academic achievement and success (Banks & Banks, 1989; Banks, 1991; Gay, 2010). Banks focused on education as a systematic structure of power and led to teacher preparation programs incorporating his theory and work within higher education.

Ladson-Billings (2001) suggested that “an important component of preparing to be a teacher is interrogating the way status characteristics like race, class, and gender configure every aspect of our lives” (p. 5). This interrogation can lead to teachers becoming leaders within their own classroom and increasing their overall connection with Black students, a central factor necessary to promote student engagement with learning. Gay (2010) posited that the majority of classroom learning experiences are directly relevant and reflective of students' home lives and cultural experiences outside of school. Bringing lived experiences into classroom learning allows in-service teachers and students to connect and engage holistically within the classroom.

Research by bell hooks offers a lens that suggests being fully engaged while teaching and incorporating the lived experiences of teachers and students increases Black students' academic achievement and engagement in k-12 education. Engaging Black students in classrooms helps to improve equity and achievement in k-12 education. Including culturally responsive pedagogy reduces the marginalization of Black students and improves equity as well (hooks, 1994;



Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

Multicultural education, engaged pedagogy, and culturally responsive pedagogy are three methods that offer k-12 in-service teachers a perspective that would help achieve the goal of increasing Black student learning. Siwatu et al. (2017) suggested, “understanding the relationship between culture and classroom behavior may assist teachers in implementing culturally responsive interventions” (p. 864). It is specific interventions tailored to Black students that impact the overall educational experience. The embodiment of accepting the totality of Black students is what leads to a holistic view and shift in education.

hooks (1994) encouraged teachers to include holistic teaching within their curriculum. hooks (1994) defined holistic teaching as a way, “To educate as the practice of freedom and believes that learning process comes easiest to those of us who also believe that our work is not merely to share information but to share in the intellectual and spiritual growth of our students” (p. 13). Holistic teaching and learning allow teachers to teach the whole child instead of primarily focusing on test scores and academic achievement.

Through effective pedagogical methods used to teach Black students, teachers extend their abilities to teach the whole child and connect with their identifiers (hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Gay, 2010). For Black students, having teachers that can teach holistically and engagingly can be a factor in closing achievement gaps, raising self-esteem, and the overall success of their academic achievement.

K-12 in-service teachers are positioned to pave the way for equitable education to occur in classrooms. By focusing on the whole child, and incorporating engaged pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy, k-12 in-service teachers can make an impact on Black student learning.

## **Barriers to Pedagogical Methods for Black Students**

Understanding teacher-student interactions that impact Black students involves researching the space between k-12 preservice teacher theory and k-12 in-service teacher practice. There are barriers that contribute to marginalization and low academic achievement of Black k-12 students (Sleeter 2012, 2016; Warren, 2018). As a result, barriers can lead to an inequitable education for Black students.

One of the key barriers to effective pedagogy with Black students is the way in which teachers conflate ‘equality’ and equity.’ Grant and Sleeter (2012) clarified that equity is not quite the same as equality. Grant and Sleeter (2012) defined equality as “elements that can be counted or measured, such as test scores, funding formulas, or numbers of books in the library, (p. 55). They further defined equality as “treating everyone in exactly the same way or distributing resources uniformly across the population” (p. 55). Educational reforms generally point to the above definition when trying to improve marginalized students’ learning experience. However, equality gives a false notion that students are receiving the same educational opportunity to learn and excel academically and socially. In several schools, both public and private, there is a disparity in the curriculum, teaching methods, and access to services depending on the district (Grant & Sleeter, 2011).

Grant and Sleeter (2011) explained equity as the reference “to judgments about what is most desirable and just, and it draws attention to ways in which resources or opportunities might need to be distributed unequally if groups that start with unequal advantages are to succeed” (p.55). Sahlberg (2012) asserted, “Equity in schooling ensures that differences in educational outcomes are not the result of differences in wealth, income, power, or possessions” (p. 2). For Black students, reaching equity is a driving force for academic success. Their academic success involves in-service teachers and what they believe about Black student learning. Based on my

years of experience, I believe that in-service Black and White teachers have similar and different beliefs in what they believe to be important in enabling Black students to learn.

In the current climate of racism, high-stakes testing, and performance-based accountability measures, there is a pressing need to reconsider the nature of teaching and thoughts and beliefs around what it means to teach Black students. K-12 in-service teachers are uniquely positioned to become aware of the thoughts that inform their attitudes when teaching k-12 Black students. This could be the genesis that leads to the intentional incorporation of culturally responsive pedagogy within professional development.

Scholars have noted that many k-12 in-service teachers do not implement culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching in their classrooms. Sleeter (2016) concluded “that although most teachers believed that they knew what culturally responsive pedagogy is, most attributed their students’ academic difficulties to factors within student and family rather than pedagogical factors under educators’ control” (p. 157). It is imperative that professional development for teachers is aligned with pedagogical theories that work to advance Black student achievement. Teachers’ capacity to bring lived experiences into the classroom will aid in achieving equitable education.

Closing equity gaps can become intentional and based on more than standardized tests. Teachers will have to take full responsibility to exhibit care in their classroom with the Black students they serve. Extending culturally responsive pedagogy beyond research and preservice teachers and connecting it to practicality in the form of teacher preparation and leadership can transform how teachers teach Black students and hopefully close inequities that are experienced daily by Black students in public schools. The current study will offer insight into the practices and foci being emphasized by in-service teachers in multicultural settings. By gathering this

information, future literature will hopefully be able to bridge the gap between preservice theory and in-service effectiveness successfully.

### **Organization of Remaining Thesis**

In Chapter II, I discuss existing literature that focuses on the importance of engaged pedagogy and culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching. I explore methods that have worked while teaching Black students. I also explore in depth the barriers that stop in-service teachers from implementing working pedagogical theories while teaching Black students. In addition, I also review the disparities that happen when teachers allow barriers to be present in classrooms and within their interaction with Black students.

Chapter III focuses on the methodological approach I will be using to answer my overall questions: “*What do k-12 in-service teachers deem to be important while teaching Black students in an urban school setting?*” and “*In what ways do Black and White teachers think the same, and differently about what contributes to Black students’ learning?*”

Using Repertory Grid, an interviewing technique that is underpinned by Personal Construct Theory (Kelly, 1955), I investigate how in-service teachers construct beliefs that enable Black students to learn. As an interviewing technique, repertory grid will be helpful to determine common constructs held by both White and Black in-service teachers about what leads to Black students’ learning within a classroom setting. In a study regarding the belief patterns of professors about culturally responsive teaching Jenkin and Alfred (2017) posited, “The professors transformed into culturally responsive teachers when they experienced disorienting learning and teaching encounters that caused them to rethink their beliefs” (p. 152). This adds to the epistemological stance of this study that rethinking and changing beliefs can lead to a better understanding of the world around in-service teachers. This information could be used to inform

professional developments and to help raise the capacity of k-12 in-service teachers that teach Black students. Chapter IV offers the analysis and results of this study's data. Chapter V concludes with a discussion of findings, implications drawn from the data, and suggestions for future research.

## Chapter II: Literature Review

The previous chapter has indicated that teachers' effectiveness and cultural pedagogical approaches are essential to Black students' academic success and meaningful engagement within k-12 public education. Teachers' ability to connect with Black students and be sensitive to their needs, while increasing academic achievement, has been researched and studied for over 35 years (Banks, 1976; Gay, 2000, 2010; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ladson-Billing, 1994, 1995, 2014; Warren, 2018). Today, preservice teachers have a plethora of knowledge relating to culture, inequity, race, curriculum, and teaching. However, Warren (2018) posited, "Teacher education can prepare candidates with any number of specific dispositions, but that does not mean that each candidate [preservice teacher] will be effective in the diverse teaching contexts" (p. 179). The influence of the dispositions or perceptions of in-service teachers that affect the in-service teacher's pedagogical cultural beliefs are central to this study. In-service teachers' thoughts and beliefs formed within preservice learning are not always aligned with cultural pedagogical theory needed when teaching Black students within k-12 public classroom settings. Sheridan (2016) argued that preservice teacher's pedagogical beliefs are often hard to change because they are usually shaped by each individual own personal belief system. Sheridan (2016) further posited, "In constructing new beliefs, pre-service teachers must link theory to practice" (p. 2).

To understand this misalignment, this study asks questions that help reveal what in-service teachers believe about what enables Black students to learn. In-service teachers' beliefs are factors that inform teaching practices when teaching Black students. This chapter discusses research that focuses on culture and cultural pedagogical methods and known theoretical barriers that impede the application of knowledge as an in-service teacher within k-12 public educational systems. In-service teachers' dispositions, thoughts, and known barriers can

impact teacher abilities to enact cultural pedagogies. Teacher quality and effectiveness while teaching Black students in k-12 education can also be impacted (Gay, 2010; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Warren, 2018). Although barriers are created from internal and external factors, in-service teachers could combat barriers by acknowledging their thinking patterns that lead to incorporating cultural pedagogical knowledge in their classrooms as an in-service teacher (Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Simić et al., 2017; Sleeter, 2016a). Scholars have also begun to look at why specific pedagogical methods are not implemented throughout k-12 public education classrooms (Dixson & Anderson, 2018; Grant & Sleeter, 2011; Sleeter, 2016a; Warren, 2018). To understand the current pedagogical theories and methods being studied in teacher education programs with preservice teachers, I start by considering the history of cultural pedagogy within the American public educational systems and defining what is meant when culture is referred to in this context.

### **History of Cultural Pedagogical Methods and Teaching Practices**

Academic improvement and student behavior rely on in-service teachers' effectiveness within k-12 public education (Warren, 2018). When race and ethnic culture are added to measure k-12 public school district's student achievement, a disparity between Black and White students' achievements is recognized (Ladson-Billings, 2001). A substantial amount of literature in teacher education programs continues to focus on pedagogical methods and preservice teacher's self-efficacy, thoughts, and beliefs to improve equality and equity within k-12 public education (Banks, 1976, 1991; Gay, 1975, 1988, 1995, 2000, 2010, 2013; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1994, 1995a, 2014; Sleeter, 1989, 2012, 2016). This literature is steeped in cultural awareness, cultural pedagogy, and cultural teaching.

The historical nature of cultural awareness and pedagogy was birthed during the civil rights movement. During this time, Black families were aware of their right to be treated equally and were willing to fight for that right (Banks, 1976). Education had become a ground for equality to take place; thus, Gary et al. (1975) argued that if racial minority students are to be taught effectively, teachers “must learn wherein their cultural differences lie” (p. 5). Teachers acknowledging their cultural differences and using the difference as resources to teach students about each other, and the world has positive academic impacts on Black students (Banks, 2001; Gay, 2000; Gay & Kirkland, 2003; Ladson-Billings, 1995b).

The value of cultural awareness and acknowledgment in k-12 education encourages a sense of belonging and acceptance among Black students. This is important as Black students navigate a system that is created and dominated by White culture. Educational reform movements and research spurred by educators wanting to use cultural referents in their curriculum and teaching strategies led to pedagogical theories and teaching methods specific to Black students. I will briefly define and describe pedagogical theories and practices created, initiated, and implemented to create educational equity and include culture within teacher educator programs. Table 2.1 refers to the cultural inclusion and unique indicators that separate cultural theories discussed in scholarly literature.



**Table 2.1***Cultural Pedagogical Theories and Practices*

<b>Reference</b>	<b>Cultural Inclusion</b>	<b>Unique Indicators</b>
Banks (1976, 1989, 1991, 2001a, 2009); Gay (1975)	<p><b>Multicultural Education (ME)</b></p> <p><b>Definition:</b> Integration of culture in classroom instruction.</p> <p><b>Taught in teacher education programs</b></p>	<p>Includes the following five dimensions and views school as a social system.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Content Integration</li> <li>• Knowledge Construction</li> <li>• Prejudice Reduction</li> <li>• Equity Pedagogy</li> <li>• Empowering School Culture</li> </ul> <p><b>ME is teacher-driven and focuses on curriculum and Equality</b></p>
Ladson-Billings (1994, 1995a, 2014)	<p><b>Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP)</b></p> <p><b>Definition:</b> Teaching from a cultural lens and incorporating it into everyday curriculum.</p> <p>Taught in teacher education programs</p>	<p>Evidence is determined through student outcomes that are tied to teachers.</p> <p>Teachers choose how they act on their professional, moral, and political commitments.</p> <p>academic excellence for all students; the fostering of cultural competence; and the development of the critical social consciousness</p>
Ladson-Billings (1994); Gay (2000, 2010)	<p><b>Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT)</b></p> <p><b>Definition:</b> a pedagogy that recognizes the importance of including students' cultural references in all aspects of learning</p> <p>Taught in teacher education programs</p>	<p>Incorporates the belief that teachers care.</p> <p>Acknowledges that educational enterprises such as funding, administration, and policymaking must also be reformed to improve marginalized students of color.</p> <p><b>CRT is student-focused and incorporates classroom community</b></p>

Reference	Cultural Inclusion	Unique Indicators
hooks (1994)	<p><b>Engaged Pedagogy (EP)</b></p> <p><b>Definition:</b> a concept that brings the teacher's and student's lived experiences in the classroom and curriculum.</p> <p>Engaged learning spaces requires teachers to be responsive to students needs that include the cultural and lived experiences that differentiate each student from the next</p> <p>Taught in teacher education programs</p>	<p>Requires mutual vulnerability, trust, and empathy</p> <p>Includes Self Disclosure</p> <p><b>EP is teacher and student-focused</b></p>

It could be argued that the inclusion of the above cultural pedagogies within k-12 classrooms would benefit all students and should not be specific to Black students or marginalized populations because to do so is simply good teaching (Ladson-Billings, 1995b). However, teacher/student interactions that lack cultural synchronization can lead to inequitable education and an increase of school and disciplinary practices with unfavorable outcomes for Black students (Irvine 1990; Monroe & Obidah, 2004). More recently, the notion that racism continues to plague the connection between teacher/student interactions within classrooms and academic success of Black students lends to the need to focus on the culture of Black students and what teachers believe about Black student learning while in classrooms environments (Dixson & Anderson, 2018; Sleeter, 2016b). Thus, the next section will define culture and discuss culture and education as it relates to Black students.

## **The Role of Culture in K-12 Education**

The culture of Black students has historically not been acknowledged in the schooling process and has resulted in outcomes with disparity gaps (Banks & Banks, 1989; Delpit, 1993; Irvine, 1990; Sleeter, 2000). K-12 public educational curriculums based on the dominant cultural (normative) ways of doing and thinking marginalize other groups. Not only are there structural and systemic barriers in the school system that influence students and preservice teachers of color, but teachers' education is also explicitly and implicitly influenced by culture. That is, the majority of pre-service teachers are educated in a Western-centric fashion, with an emphasis on Western culture and history. For Black students, this can lead to consequences that result in negative societal and educational implications. The lack of the inclusion of culture in public k-12 education excludes Black students lived experiences within classroom settings. Understanding and defining culture to extend into public k-12 classroom environments is a necessary step toward equitable education.

The term culture has several definitions that apply to k-12 public education. Bullivant (1987) defined culture as a group's program for survival in and adaptation to its environment. The cultural program consists of knowledge, concepts, and values shared by group members through systems of communication. Banks (1991) described culture as being attributed to a group's program for survival and adaptation' to physical, social, and metaphysical environments. This definition is more appropriate and inclusive of diverse populations because it includes the social and cultural aspects that students bring to the classroom.

But when considering the lived experiences of students and the social factors that influence their lives a more applicable definition to Black students in k-12 education is applied for this study. Culture, as defined by Delgado-Gaitan and Trueba (1991) and echoed in Gay's (2000) earlier work, was seen as "a dynamic system of social values, cognitive codes, behavioral

standards, worldviews, and beliefs used to give order and meaning to our own lives as well as the lives of others” (p. 8). Gay (2000) also applied this definition when inserting the premise that culture is influential and “determines how we think, believe, and behave” (p. 9). When culture is perceived as a dynamic system, it suggests the importance of how a student’s lived experiences affect the world they navigate daily. Additionally, culture infuses teachers’ and students’ behavior and their beliefs about worldviews and values. These beliefs spill out during classroom instruction and are often in direct conflict with school curriculum and teacher experiences. Thus, the educational process includes all aspects of students’ values, cognition, behavior, community, and beliefs.

As a social process, it is essential to keep culture at the heart of a student’s educational process (Banks, 1991; Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995b). Banks (1991) introduced this notion to respond to a growing diverse population and a lack of cultural awareness implemented within teacher education programs. Culture influences the beliefs, values, and behaviors that students and in-service teachers bring to the instructional process. Inserting culture into k-12 public education demands ethnically different students to be a part of the normative system tasked with teaching them the foundations of the society they are apart.

Although culture’s importance is taught to preservice teachers, in-service teachers need to understand the impact cultural differences might have on education success (Gay, 2000; Irvine, 2003; King, 1993; Sleeter, 2000). Ladson-Billings (1994) suggested the need to foster cultural competence and posited that cultural competence “transcends negative effects of the dominant culture” (p. 17). This study is concerned with this understanding of cultural competence and culturally relevant pedagogy’s aim to transcend the dominant culture to breakdown societal barriers among in-service teachers. To breakdown these barriers, Ladson-Billings (1994) posited

that culturally relevant pedagogy, unlike more traditional approaches to education, asks preservice teachers to question their understanding of social construction such as morality, culture, language, and privilege. This understanding may lead to in-service teachers accepting responsibility for their thoughts and beliefs while teaching k-12 Black students in public educational settings. Recognizing the importance of this, the chapter now moves to examine pedagogical strategies taught to pre-service teachers and the barriers and gaps that prevent the implementation among in-service teachers.

### **Pedagogical Methods and Strategies for Black Students**

There are four pedagogical methods and strategies that are highlighted in this study. Each method includes cultural facets suggested as best practices when teaching Black students (Banks, 1976; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). I begin with multicultural education.

#### ***Multicultural Education***

James Banks, the founder of Multicultural Education (ME), provided a road map to assist preservice educators in relating to multicultural students during a time of racial unrest (Banks, 1976). This racial unrest was a critical time in history because of the integration of schools, the rise of cultural differences, and overt racism within communities and school structures.

ME is the integration of culture in classroom instruction (Banks, 1976). Banks (1991) started multicultural education to diversify education to support and aid marginalized and ethnic students' educational achievement. As has been mentioned previously, Banks (2001b) believed that teachers should embrace “an assimilationist ideology,” suggesting that a good teacher is effective with all types of students regardless of issues of such diversity as students’ race, social class, or ethnicity (p. 118). This ideology has created achievement gaps among students and has had adverse effects on students of color. In order to practice and incorporate ME, schools must

look at the entire social system to inform how to create a more equitable system for all students.

Banks and Banks (1989) asserted that k-12 education could choose to focus on one or more factors when looking at school reform, “but changes must take place on each of them to create and sustain an effective multicultural school environment” (p. 22). The social system of schools includes variables and factors that add to schools' culture and success, such as: *Content Integration, Knowledge Construction, Prejudice Reduction, Equity Pedagogy, and Empowering School Culture* (Banks & Banks, 1989). As Banks described, each system is categorized into five areas that are fundamental to ME (Banks & Banks, 1989).

The intricacy of ME reveals the many facets that are needed for ME to be successfully implemented by in-service teachers. However, this theory is situated among teacher education programs with only small aspects adopted by in-service teachers (Sleeter, 1989). Pre-service teachers learn the aspects of ME and typically focus on one central area in the classrooms. That area of focus is typically curriculum (Sleeter, 1989). Sleeter (1989) discussed in a case study how curriculum and students' lived experiences rarely align, thus not meeting the needs of Black students. With a narrowed focus on integrating cultural aspects within the curriculum in k-12 public education, ME needed to embrace the notion that equality was not enough, and equity must be achieved for academic achievement to occur among Black students. Banks (2001b) expanded this notion as he added equity pedagogy as a fifth aspect needed within ME. Ladson-Billings started with equity as a viable goal when she introduced Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP).

### ***Culturally Relevant Pedagogy***

Another pedagogical method that has been shown to be beneficial to Black k-12 students is Culturally Relevant Pedagogy (CRP). Introduced by Gloria Ladson-Billings, CRP is defined as teaching from a cultural lens and incorporating it into everyday curriculum. Ladson-Billings based her research partly off Irvine's (1990) work, which suggests the failure of African American students at school involves both micro- and macro-aspects, including teacher-student interpersonal contexts, teacher and student expectations, institutional contexts, and the societal context (Ladson-Billings, 1995a). Once again, this points to the importance of teacher/student relationships and interactions.

Like Banks, Ladson-Billings (2001) suggested that the student achievement gap between Black and White students can be decreased when districts incorporate culture into their curriculum, leadership, and classrooms. Therefore, she introduced a theoretical model that incorporated the need to focus on student achievement as well as acknowledgement and affirmation of students' cultural identity. Thus, CRP was termed and created.

Through research, CRP became validated by Ladson-Billings' interest to deem and find teachers who were defined as excellent teachers of Black students. Through interviews, observations, and meetings with teachers in Northern California, Ladson-Billings concluded that excellent teachers should be looked at from their reality. The "paradigmatic shift" included the voices of parents of the students the Northern California teachers taught (Ladson-Billings, 1995b, p. 472). As a result of this research, several themes emerged that helped to describe the characteristics of excellent teachers: *Use of dialogue in assessing knowledge claims, an ethic of caring, and ethic of personal accountability*. Ladson-Billings (1995) posited that Black students could achieve and have academic success with the inclusion of cultural competence and culturally relevant teaching methods. This required teachers to expand their pedagogical lens to

include culture, community, and social justice. This also required teachers to include their pedagogical lens in curriculum and teaching methods.

Gay came to this conclusion much earlier and, in 1975, identified specific ways to develop curriculum with a multi-educational focus. Gay (1975) posited, “Ethnic material should be used to teach such fundamental skills as reading, writing, calculating, and reasoning” (p. 179). Gay (2000) echoed the sentiment of Ladson-Billings and added that teaching should not just be relevant but also responsive. Thus, Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT) became another avenue to help support teachers achieve academic achievement and engagement for Black k-12 students.

### ***Culturally Responsive Teaching***

The role of teachers is instrumental when determining a student's success and has been linked as an important factor that affects a student's school performance (Howard & Terry, 2011; Schmoker, 2006). In fact, Warren (2018) described an effective teacher as one that has the capacity to make “professional decisions that lead to favorable student outcomes” (p. 169). Warren's description of an effective teacher suggests that teachers who are student-centered try to do what is in the best interest of all students. This notion that favorable outcomes may only refer to a particular group of students is the reason why the need for culturally responsive teaching arose. It is the favorable outcomes that are disproportionately unequal for Black students. Warren (2018) further posited that increasing the effectiveness of teachers includes preservice teachers creating an alignment between instruction and interpersonal interactions that includes culturally responsive pedagogy. Hence, this furthers the argument that culturally responsive teaching does not include just good teaching practices, but is in fact, teaching that aids in creating equitable education for Black students.



Culturally Responsive Teaching (CRT), as defined by Gay (2010), is “using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 26). Gay (2010) suggested that ethnic identity, student achievement, and cultural background must have close interactions for success. It is within these interactions that students are given a chance for success. Ladson-Billings (1995) reinforced that the term culturally responsive “refers to a more dynamic or synergistic relationship between home/community culture and school culture” (p. 467). Such a framework would likely prove most appropriate when discussing the academic achievement and engagement of Black students. This distinguished definition is necessary for teachers to be effective. Gay (2000) asserted that CRT teaches the whole student and includes “personal and cultural strengths, their intellectual capabilities and their prior accomplishments” (p. 26). Similarly, Gay (2010) defined culturally responsive teaching “as using the cultural knowledge, prior experiences, frames of reference, and performance styles of ethnically diverse students to make learning encounters more relevant to and effective for them” (p. 31). According to this view culturally responsive teachers are:

- Socially and academically empowering by setting high expectations for students with a commitment to every student’s success;
- Multidimensional because they engage cultural knowledge, experiences, contributions, and perspectives;
- Validating of every student’s culture, bridging gaps between school and home through diversified instructional strategies and multicultural curricula;
- Socially, emotionally, and politically comprehensive as they seek to educate the whole child;

- Transformative of schools and societies by using students' existing strengths to drive instruction, assessment, and curriculum design;
  - Emancipatory and liberating from oppressive educational practices and ideologies.
- (Gay, 2010, p. 38)

Although early work (Gay, 1975, 1980) focused more on curriculum, culturally responsive teaching has evolved to focus on how instruction takes place with the burden of responsibility on the teacher (Gay, 2013). This move from curriculum to the way in which instruction is handled indicates the importance of my first research question: *“What do k-12 in-service teachers deem to be important while teaching Black students in an urban school setting.”* This research question moves the focus to the lived experiences of in-service teachers currently working with Black students. Understanding this could prove to be a first step in understanding in-service teachers' beliefs that are infused in classroom settings with Black students. If in-service teachers do not believe that culture is a necessary belief in enabling Black students to learn, then the burden of responsibility may not be recognized nor realized by in-service teachers. With the exclusion of culture, Black student classroom engagement may be hard to achieve. bell hooks (1994) introduced Engaged Pedagogy (EP) to emphasize the need for connection and lived experiences in classrooms.

### ***Engaged Pedagogy***

Engaged pedagogy is a pedagogical theory that connects the teacher's and students' lived experiences with what goes on in classrooms and what is taught through curricula. The ability to teach Black students lies within the continued lived experiences of the teachers who teach them [Black students] (hooks, 1994). Because of the diverse population of schools and the need to have equitable education, there has been an emphasis on teacher education programs to include education and theory that focuses on poverty, culture, and race. Pedagogical research has been

created with the intention to aid in student engagement, achievement, and equity gaps that students face (Ladson-Billings, 1995a).

hooks (1994) introduced EP for college educators, to bring introduced freedom as a viable practice when educating k-12 students. She recommended the process of teaching students “in a manner that respects and cares for their souls” (p. 13). This is also the sentiments of Gay’s CRT methods. That is, hooks (1994) proposed that teaching should bend toward the belief that anyone can learn. Engaged learning spaces require teachers to be responsive to students’ needs that include the cultural and lived experiences that differentiate each student from the next (hooks, 1994). This connects to similar research that requires teachers to be responsive to Black students and connect the community and school needs in classroom curriculum and instruction (Gay; 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2018; Warren, 2018).

Warren (2018) argued that although teachers hold power and influence over students, their lived experiences are unpredictable factors that are outside of their control. However, in-service teachers can control how they respond to those lived experiences. “This is a hefty task when in-service teachers are not currently required or trained to do such a task.” Ladson-Billings (1994) posited, “Prospective teachers do not easily relinquish beliefs—developed as a result of their own cultural and educational experiences—about themselves or others” (pp. 130–131). Milam et al. (2014) discussed engaged pedagogy as having to include “mutual vulnerability.” “Engaged pedagogy warrants the vulnerability of the teacher/professor via revealment of personal lived experiences in connection with the subject” (p. 2). Whether students have an innate desire to know that you have lived experiences that can relate to their lives or not, the mutual vulnerability only contributes to increased engagement.

hooks (1994) affirmed that Engaged Pedagogy requires the teacher-educator to initiate vulnerability to establish trust. Telling one's own story first helps to establish that trust and establishes an environment where students can reveal their own stories. Hooks (1994) advocated for an education that goes beyond the classroom and relates to students as whole human beings, including their lived experiences. Incorporating the whole child into teaching creates student-centered learning and requirements for teachers to be mindful of the students they serve.

The pedagogical theories are situated in pre-service education programs housed in colleges and universities. College students are not required to take classes on cultural pedagogical knowledge; however, cultural pedagogical knowledge may be acquired in required classes such as Introduction to Education. This provides a dilemma for in-service teachers who have been teaching more than ten years and did not receive this knowledge at all. This also creates a dilemma for in-service teachers that are not provided professional development around this topic. In-service teachers are not prepared to include culturally responsive pedagogy into classrooms (Sleeter, 2012; Warren, 2018).

### **Pre-service Knowledge to In-service Dilemma**

The history of cultural pedagogical methods and teaching practices gives credence to the need to incorporate culture into teaching and curriculum. This practice leads to measurable gains in achievement and engagement of k-12 Black students (Gay, 2010). The adoption of ME, CRP, CRT, and EP has been widely accepted in teacher education programs and taught to pre-service teachers as a common goal to achieve when teaching Black students. However, k-12 Black students are not benefiting from the knowledge that pre-service teachers are gaining in their teacher education programs (Sleeter, 2012). In fact, Black students in Ohio had little academic

gains and high discipline rates in 2013. They were three times as likely to be disciplined for disobedient or disruptive behavior as other ethnic groups (U.S Department of Education, 2015).

Lambeth and Smith (2016) explored the possible reasons that preservice teachers do not implement what they learn in teacher educator programs when teaching Black students. They asserted, “Preparing culturally responsive teachers with enthusiasm and competence to teach in these more diverse school settings is conceivably one of the most overwhelming tasks facing teacher educators today” (Lambeth & Smith, 2016, p. 47). In-service teachers may possibly feel that teaching in diverse settings is overwhelming because applying pedagogical knowledge to practical practice does not align with in-service teachers’ personal beliefs. As aforementioned in Chapter I, Sheridan (2016) addressed this by asserting that pedagogical beliefs are not easily adapted when they conflict with personal beliefs.

Although there is a plethora of studies that have shown evidence that incorporating culture, race, and the lived experiences of Black students yields higher achievement and engagement results (Gay, 2010; Grant & Sleeter, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2011; Warren, 2018); Siwatu et al. (2017) asserted, “cultural understanding alone may not predict whether teachers implement culturally responsive practices in the classroom” (p. 864). In order to identify what beliefs drive in-service teachers’ actions in k-12 classroom settings, I first address specific, researched barriers that impact in-service teachers from implementing cultural pedagogies and methods while teaching Black students.

### **Barriers Impacting In-service Teachers**

Although the aforementioned pedagogical methods have been positioned and vaguely taught in teacher education programs, there are barriers that have slowed the progression of their implementation in k-12 education. Pre-service teachers are somewhat taught scholarly research

on best practices to incorporate culture into classroom instruction and curriculum. However, there are still many in-service teachers that do not feel prepared for diverse classrooms (Ladson-Billings, 2011; Warren; 2018). Teachers that do not incorporate culture in the classroom can create barriers to learning for k-12 Black students. Ladson-Billings (2011) asserted, this can be problematic because “the very coursework that comprises teacher education fails to take up notions of culture and learning in robust and substantive ways” (p. 14). Grant and Sleeter (2011) outlined the importance of doing multicultural education for achievement and equity. Academic achievement is school districts’ and the government’s measurement of student success in America’s k-12 educational system. If Black students are not achieving, then America is not achieving.

K-12 teachers should consider the benefits of multicultural education, culturally relevant teaching, culturally responsive teaching, and engaged pedagogy when teaching k-12 Black students (Grant & Sleeter, 2011). As stated previously, when culture is infused in the curriculum and congruity with teaching and learning occurs, gains in higher academic achievement and engagement are possible. Standard Based Education (SBE), the lack of professional development, teacher’s self-efficacy, and racism are barriers to implementing cultural pedagogical knowledge (Dixson & Anderson, 2018; English, 2016; Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Lambeth & Smith, 2016; Sleeter, 2012, 2016, 2018). Table 2.2 gives a snapshot of the barriers that are the focus of this study. These specific barriers have been themes throughout literature for at least ten years.

**Table 2. 2***In-service Teachers Barriers to Implementing Cultural Pedagogical Knowledge*

<b>Reference</b>	<b>Barrier (s)</b>	<b>Evidence in Literature</b>
Sleeter (2012, 2016); English (2016)	<b>Standard Based Education (SBE) &amp; Compulsory Testing</b>	<p>consumed with high-stakes testing and performance-based accountability measures</p> <p>neoliberal reforms reverse the empowered learning that culturally responsive pedagogy has the potential to support.</p> <p>policies focused disproportionately on student test outcomes can promote teaching practices that are reified and mechanical</p>
Ladson-Billings (1994); Gay (2000, 2010); hooks (1994)	<b>Lack of Professional Development aligned with Cultural Pedagogical and Teaching Literature</b>	<p>culture should be incorporated within professional development training</p> <p>infusing culture involves more than just a curriculum change or class activity</p> <p>preservice teachers are not prepared for diverse classrooms upon becoming and in-service teacher</p>

Reference	Barriers	Evidence in Literature
Siwatu et al. (2017)	<b>Teacher's Self-efficacy</b>	<p>includes having the belief to connect, empathize, engage, self-reflect, and truly care for the students they teach</p> <p>that the single greatest determinant of learning is not socioeconomic factors or funding levels, it is instruction</p> <p>teaching had six to 10 times as much impact on achievement as all other factors combined.</p>
Sleeter (2012, 2016); Dixson (2018); Dixson and Anderson (2018)	<b>Racism</b>	<p>educational achievement and school retention rates of African American children have lagged those of Whites for as long as record has existed</p> <p>Black students in Ohio were disproportionately susceptible to receiving these excessive responses to perceived misbehavior.</p>



Acknowledging the known barriers above is important for teachers' awareness. A key component of effective teaching includes reflection on a teacher's own disposition. Teacher dispositions and actions are vitally important when it comes to teaching urban Black students. The position of power that teachers hold could affect academic achievement and behavior records for urban Black students (Warren, 2018). Thus, the awareness of the implementation of cultural pedagogy is monumental in teacher/student interactions (Gay, 2010; Sleeter, 2016a).

### ***Standard Based Education and Compulsory Testing***

Standardization reform itself is destructive to the potential of learning for marginalized students, and research has shown that it is especially destructive for Black students. Sleeter (2012) argued that neoliberal reforms reverse the empowered learning that culturally responsive pedagogy has the potential to support. English (2016) asserted that the educational climate in America is consumed with high-stakes testing and performance-based accountability measures. This places student achievement as a high priority for public school districts, whether administrators or teachers agree. English (2016) wrote, "Policies focused disproportionately on student test outcomes can promote teaching practices that are reified and mechanical" (p. 161). These practices result in teachers focused on student test scores and core curriculum instead of the student themselves. This limits the capacity of teachers to engage and connect with students and focuses on achievement instead of the student themselves. The emphasis on testing, standards, and accountability that is mandated in most states compels many teachers to focus on narrow and basic skills in reading, writing, and math (Sleeter, 2005).

The standardization phenomenon was partially born from a report written in 1983 by the National Council on Excellence in Education (NCEE) titled: *A Nation at Risk (ANAR)*. The report posited:

If an unfriendly foreign power had attempted to impose on America the mediocre educational performance that exists today, we might well have viewed it as an act of war. As it stands, we have allowed this to happen to ourselves. We have even squandered the gains in student achievement made in the wake of the Sputnik challenge. Moreover, we have dismantled essential support systems, which helped make those gains possible. We have, in effect, been committing an act of unthinking, unilateral educational disarmament. (Demmert, 1984, p. 24)

After extensively reviewing the report, the focus of SBE was enforced on school districts across the country. The ways teachers were evaluated were immensely affected. For Black students, this opened the door for disparities to widen. ANAR recommended “that schools, colleges, and universities adopt more rigorous and measurable standards, and higher expectations, for academic performance and student conduct, and that 4-year colleges and universities raise their requirements for admission” (Demmert, 1984). ANAR’s expectations of rigor placed SBE at the forefront and created competition between schools, states, and districts to prove they were performing at high levels and hitting the goals that were assigned to them. Educational requirements were profoundly inequitable for Black students under SBE’s regulation. Teachers’ ability to improve Black students’ academic achievement was failing, at best, as the focus for in-service teachers moved away from cultural pedagogy to compulsory education.

Academic achievement did not improve despite the adaptation of rigorous testing and standardization of curriculum. In 2000, the Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA) conducted a comparative study among first world countries on how students fared across countries in reading. The PISA is a worldwide exam administered every three years that

measures 15-year-olds in 72 countries. America ranked low, causing the federal administration to take another look at the educational system and reforms. This prompted then-President George W. Bush to authorize No Child Left Behind (NCLB) in 2001 for the purpose of improving test scores through testing and accountability. The purpose of NCLB was to set high academic achievement standards and to help all students reach proficiency in those standards by 2014 (Schraw, 2010). NCLB failed miserably, and according to PISA results in 2003 and 2006, the United States continued to struggle in reading, math, and science compared to other countries.

The alignment to SBE has led to standardized testing, compulsory education, and accountability for students and teachers. SBE also connects test scores to high graduation, which affects graduation rates across the country. From a positive perspective, Carnoy (2005) argued that SBE variables are related in complex ways and impact teaching effectiveness and student achievement. However, this approach to education creates a school environment that focuses on standards and academics, leaving little to no room for student-focused learning. Although research has supported the fact that incorporating culture into American classrooms will have an academic benefit to students, it is rarely implemented in districts across the country (Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). One factor is the demand for standards-based education. Dixson and Rousseau (2005) asserted that their “voices” are valid forms of “evidence” and conclude that their experiences challenge a “numbers only” approach to documenting inequity” (p. 11). Many districts focus their attention on aligning curriculum to test and only teaching what is needed to pass the state exam. This leaves little room for true teacher autonomy. This also creates a gap in academic achievement because teachers are not teaching to the whole child, thus leaving students disengaged in the learning process. They are focused on whole group instruction instead of individual learning needs. For achievement growth to occur, students must be actively engaged

in the learning process. Engagement refers to affective dimensions of classroom experience and behaviors (Fredericks et al., 2004).

For many Black students, curriculum and instruction systems are important because those who teach them control what and how they are learning. As stressed earlier, Black students bring their culture and background to classrooms, which affects their ability to engage. Gay (2000) posited pedagogical paradigms and techniques that may be effective but not culturally situated for marginalized, underachieving ethnic groups are not included in discussions centered on academic achievement. As a result, standard-based education caters to a specific type of student, making it harder to create educational equity for all students in America.

SBE creates more disparities and divides than learning. Schools have closed because of their lack of meeting test score expectations, teachers have fled the field, and more importantly, Black students continue to be marginalized (Howard & Terry, 2011). America, a testing-intensive system, earmarks funding to evaluation, standardized testing, and grade repetition. Grade repetition and multiple testing hinder equity. Brophy (2006) suggested that research in many of the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) supported countries shows that grade repetition does not provide greater benefits than promotion to the following grade. OECD (2010) reported that school systems that extensively use repetition are associated with low levels of educational performance.

Standardized testing has presented many fallacies as it relates to Black students. Equity gaps have been documented by researchers who purport that infusing culture and community into student curriculum is a viable solution (Gay, 2014; Grant & Sleeter, 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2000). Incorporating culture and lived experiences of students has the potential to balance SBE and curriculum (Warren, 2018). Teachers could leverage curriculum strategies around SBE to

become more student-focused, thus fueling engagement of students within classrooms (Gay, 2000). The self-efficacy of teachers is needed to be an extra variable that can combat SBE and government regulations that often restrict learning and engagement in k-12 classrooms (Gay, 2000; Grant & Sleeter, 2011; hooks, 1994).

The work of the aforementioned scholars is important because it breaks from the cultural deficit or cultural disadvantage explanations, which led to compensatory educational interventions imposed by federal regulations. Federal regulations discount the importance of teacher/student interactions, culture, and the impact on k-12 urban Black students' academic success. Examples of compensatory educational interventions include initiatives such as Bush's No Child Left Behind and Obama's Race to the Top programs. Both continue to focus on achievement and closing educational gaps. However, the educational reforms are poorly implemented, racially biased, and rarely achieve the desired results for the marginalized group in which they were created to serve (Gay, 2010; Grant & Sleeter, 2011).

### ***Lack of Professional Development***

The autonomy of teachers can make it difficult to incorporate leadership models within their classrooms and create equity for Black students. Countries such as Finland and Canada continue to thrive academically while the United States lags behind. In Finland and Canada, there is a strong emphasis on teacher preparation and education. Niemi (2016) posited, "The power of the nation depends especially on competent leaders, quality civil servants, and teachers" (p. 24). The research has shown that including culture and equity in professional development could be a benefit to in-service teachers. According to Gay (2014), culture should be incorporated within professional development training. Racism, equity, and inclusion are also topics of concern in public k-12 educational settings. Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995) postulated

that race remains a significant factor in society in education. In addressing racism, “they proposed that critical race theory (CRT), a framework developed by legal scholars, could be employed to examine the role of race and racism in education” (Dixson & Rousseau, 2005, p. 8). In order to uncover the multiple facets that race marginalizes and oppress Black students, it would be advantageous for school administrators to focus on effective professional development measures that increase in-service teacher’s capacity to teach Black students.

Culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching, and critical race theory have yet made their way into classrooms consistently with in-service teachers. School leadership has yet to consider the benefits of culturally responsive teaching, critical race theory, and engaged pedagogy, including gaining higher engagement and test results when culture and antiracism are infused in the curriculum and congruity with teaching and learning. Other strategies might include taking self-efficacy training, self-reflection, and other cultural pieces of training that help teachers rely on cultural understandings in their classroom.

### ***Teachers’ Self-Efficacy***

Teachers’ self-efficacy includes having the belief that connecting, empathizing, and engaging with students is important. Self-reflection and truly caring are also important components of teacher self-efficacy (Gay, 2010; Grant & Sleeter, 2011; hooks, 1994; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Siwatu et al., 2017; Warren 2018). Schmoker (2006) asserted, “That the single greatest determinant of learning is not socioeconomic factors or funding levels, it is the instruction” (p. 7). Mortimore and Sammons (1987) found that teaching had 6 to 10 times as much impact on achievement as all other factors combined. According to Banks and Banks (1989), “A challenge that multicultural education faces are how to help students from diverse groups mediate between their home and community cultures and the school culture” (p. 7). The

connection between home, community, and school is vitally important to the academic success of Black students (Gay, 2000). Marzano (2003) found numerous studies demonstrating that two teachers working with the same socioeconomic population can achieve blatantly different results on the same test. This suggests that what teachers do and say in classrooms are vital to the successful achievement of the students they teach.

Student achievement is connected to teachers' actions and their ability to relate students' learning experiences to students' home lives and cultural experiences (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 2014). Teachers including students' lived experiences, dismantles the "dualistic separation of public and private" lives that students encounter daily (hooks, 1994, p. 16). Teachers' capability to include pedagogical knowledge in classroom instruction connects to their belief about themselves. Siwatu et al. (2017) concluded after creating a self-efficacy scale, "it is important to assess teachers' culturally responsive beliefs to identify the task that they feel most and least efficacious," and further adds "knowing more about these beliefs are beneficial to teacher educators who can, in turn, use the data to design appropriate interventions to help teachers develop resilient self-efficacy beliefs" (p. 864).

Proponents of culturally responsive teaching assert that student learning is linked to teachers' self-efficacy. For example, teachers who increase their self-efficacy through training and reflection have higher test results and student academic engagement (Gay, 2010, 2013). Understanding cultural relevance and being culturally responsive do not always translate when having to implement the theory in practice when teachers enter the classroom. It is this disconnect between learning and practicing pedagogical methods that lag in k-12 public education. A final aspect that impacts student achievement and equity is racism and racial inequities that occur in k-12 education.

## ***Racism***

As a barrier to Black student learning, racism points to the problem of teacher bias, privilege, and whiteness in classrooms (Sleeter, 2016a). The field of education is made up overwhelming by White females, who are privileged and may not understand the power of the position they hold. Bell (1987) alluded that White preservice teachers lack consciousness with regard to their “racial positioning” in a society that is stratified by race. Cochran-Smith (2004) posited that examining “Whiteness” and its relationship to teaching is necessary because of the ethnic diversity that continues to grow in schools. Whiteness in this context points to the need to examine privilege that often presents as a barrier when educating Black students. According to Johnson (2018), privilege exists when one group has something of value that is denied to others simply because of group membership. Vaughan (2019) asserted, “Privilege also includes unearned advantages that are highly valued but are confined to certain groups” (p. 2). It is this notion of White privilege that racism is given room to breathe inequity into classrooms, thus perpetuating the marginalization of Black students within k-12 education.

In the racial climate today, it is imperative that schools have strong leadership to obtain equity and achievement that propel innovative thought and learning for all students (Milner, 2015). Stories of Black students experiencing racism in schools and with in-service teachers continue to be documented by scholars in the field of education (Dixon & Anderson, 2018; Sleeter, 2016a). Critical race theory frames racism as a socially constructed tool to advance white dominance (Delgado & Stefancic, 2017). According to Matsuda et al. (1993), there are six unifying themes that define critical race theory:

1. Critical Race Theory recognizes that racism is endemic to American life.
2. It expresses skepticism toward dominant legal claims of neutrality, objectivity, colorblindness and meritocracy.



3. It challenges a historicism and insists on a contextual/historical analysis of the law . . .

Critical race theorists . . . adopt a stance that presumes that racism has contributed to all contemporary manifestations of group advantage and disadvantage.

4. It insists on recognition of the experiential knowledge of people of color and our communities of origin in analyzing law and society.

5. It is interdisciplinary.

6. It works toward the end of eliminating racial oppression as part of the broader goal of ending all forms of oppression. (p. 6)

Critical Race Theory was created as a legal and social assessment of society. However, it is connected to education through the research of Ladson-Billings and Tate (1995). Their research proficiently acknowledges the significant role that white dominance and the centrality race plays in developing curriculum. Ladson-Billing and Tate (1995) addressed the prevalent myth of colorblindness and meritocracy to explain student outcomes that ignore both physical and intellectual opportunity imbalances (Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995). They discussed the significant influence that race has had in educational settings.

Over the last two decades, race as an impediment within education has not decreased (Dixson & Anderson, 2018). CRT in education “argues that racial inequity in education is the logical outcome of a system of achievement premised on competition” (Dixson & Anderson, 2018, p. 122). According to Ladson-Billings (1999a), “adopting and adapting CRT as a framework for educational equity means that we will have to expose racism in education and propose radical solutions for addressing it” (p. 27). When racism is left unaddressed, consequences emerge that affect Black student learning. An example of the consequences that Black students face is reported in a recent research conducted in Ohio, as explained below.

Ohio schools explored discipline disparities and the school-to-prison pipeline phenomena. Black students in Ohio were disproportionately vulnerable to receiving extreme responses to perceived misbehavior. During the 2012–13 academic year, Black students were more likely to be removed by a hearing officer than their non-Black peers, and 100% of all such removals were for “disruptive/disobedient behavior”—a non-violent infraction (Wright, 2016). In-service teachers’ inability to be just during classroom instruction has detrimental consequences for Black students whose voices continue to be ignored in school systems designed to uphold racist policies. Racism is overtly present in more than just Ohio schools.

Teachers not understanding or relating to the culture and race of Black students has led to barriers that multicultural education was created to dismantle. For instance, research by Morris (2019) concluded that Black girls are six times more likely to receive an out-of-school suspension than White female students, three times more likely to be restrained than White female students, and three times more likely to receive one or more in-school suspensions than White female students. This points to the explicit racism experienced by both Black boys and girls in urban schools. In order to reduce racial boundaries, teachers must be educated, informed, and well versed in their students’ cultural needs and context. As this proves to be a complex mission, both teacher education and in-service training/monitoring will likely be needed. This must begin by understanding how in-service teachers’ think and construct racism and education throughout American k-12 educational settings.

## **Summary**

The literature indicates that the transition must be made from preservice theory to in-service understandings and beliefs that will allow in-service teachers to reflect, change, and learn through professional development. A reduction of barriers, as mentioned above, within

k-12 public education, is necessary to promote the success of Black student learning. Through an emphasis on teachers' understanding and beliefs, this may be achieved. A deficit can be found in what in-service teachers believe about Black student learning and what teaching experiences inform their beliefs.

Generally, in k-12 school buildings, there has not been much systematic practice of culturally relevant pedagogy by teachers or building administrators. In answering research question one: "*What do k-12 in-service teachers deem to be important while teaching Black students in an urban school setting?*", this study seeks to determine why in-service teachers are not implementing and practicing cultural pedagogical theories. It also seeks to understand if they are not, is their lack of practice based on their personal beliefs that cultural practices are not important to Black student learning.

Warren (2018) emphasized, "Teacher educators must curate teacher preparation experiences or approaches that enable teacher candidates to acquire first-person knowledge of the young people and families they will serve" (p. 170). hooks echoed this sentiment when she introduced engaged pedagogy to college professors in 1994. Extending cultural pedagogy and teaching beyond research and connecting it to practicality in the form of teacher preparation and leadership can transform how teachers teach Black students and hopefully close the school inequities that are experienced daily by Black urban k-12 students. However, in-service teachers may not believe in the same pedagogical theories as being necessary to improve Black student learning. Therefore, research question two: *In what ways do Black and White teachers think the same and differently about what contributes to Black students' learning*, seeks to uncover any similarities or differences between Black and White in-service teachers. This may help to give a fuller picture of what beliefs are important from the perspective of Black and White in-service

teachers. This particular data has yet to be discovered within the field of education. While there is literature that supports certain pedagogical theories as more effective while teaching Black students, the notion of what in-service teachers believe is important has yet to be answered. Thus, the above research questions are fundamental to this study.

Chapter III discusses Personal Construct Theory (PCT) and Repertory Grid Technique as the methodological approach for this research (Kelly, 1955). PCT has been used with preservice teachers in earlier research to help student teachers “examine their own frame of reference” and to examine the underlying constructs that can influence teacher thoughts, beliefs, and actions (McQualter, 1985, p. 178). This study will build on that earlier work by interviewing in-service teachers in order to understand their beliefs and thoughts about teaching Black students. RepGrid technique is unique in that it captures personal meaning through both qualitative and quantitative analysis (Raja et al., 2013). The qualitative analysis can be used as a tool for encouraging reflexivity on the part of the respondent. This analysis helps to identify the respondent’s perceptions of the world, rather than influencing them to adopt the interviewer’s terminology as is often the case in traditional interviews (Bell, 1990). In-service teachers are constantly changing and redefining their beliefs about students and perceptions about teaching.

### Chapter III: Methodology

The current study involved conducting repertory grid (RepGrid) structured interviews with 40 in-service teachers within an Ohio school district, in order to identify their beliefs about what is important when educating Black students. In addition to considering the responses of all 40 teachers together, comparisons were made between the responses of Black and White in-service teachers who took part in the study. This enabled a comparison to be made between the beliefs of the Black and White in-service teachers, in order to identify the ways in which Black and White in-service teachers think the same and differently about what contributes to Black students' learning. Teacher effectiveness when teaching Black students is likely impacted by numerous factors. The factor of interest is teachers' beliefs on what enables Black students to learn and how those beliefs are similar and different among Black and White teachers. By studying this factor specifically, the most important beliefs can be recognized. The following question (s) and objective arise and will be explored in this study:

Research Question (s) and Objectives:

*RQ 1: What do in-service teachers and black students deem to be important while teaching in an urban school setting?*

*RO 1: Identify the constructs consistently associated with reported teaching experiences.*

*RQ 2: In what ways do Black and White teachers think the same, and differently about what contributes to Black students' learning?*

#### Research Paradigm

As mentioned in Chapter II, Critical Race Theory (CRT) in education challenges the deficits central to the current narrative in American schools and can be aligned to culturally responsive pedagogy to affirm the existence of Black students (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings,

1998). Working within this paradigm is important to me as a Black high school educator and college professor because of my daily experiences as a scholar and educational practitioner. My positionality is uniquely situated within a lens of a teacher of Black students, a teacher of college students studying to be teachers, and a doctoral student. Ladson-Billings (2009) has informed my efforts to be an effective teacher within a complex cultural paradigm. Although the employment of all cultural pedagogical approaches may prove impossible, I have been personally driven to maintain a consistent pattern of behavior aligned with being a “Conductor” and “Coach” (Ladson-Billings, 2009).

Being a conductor aligns with the belief that students are capable of excellence, and as a teacher, I assume responsibility for ensuring that my students achieve that excellence. I am also comfortable sharing the responsibility to help them achieve it with parents, community members, and the students themselves, which aligns with the beliefs of a coach. My informed approach is in direct opposition to assimilationist paradigms for teaching, which holds the belief that teaching is a technical task alone. Because of my two teaching positions, I have insight into what preservice educators are learning and what in-service teachers are doing. The autonomy that teachers are afforded while teaching makes it difficult to assess their effectiveness without looking at normative academic factors. The inclusion of teaching that clearly borrows from a thorough understanding of cultural methodological theories has been noticeably absent among teachers I have observed, taught, trained, and worked within Ohio Schools.

While several areas of intervention exist, the emphasis on how in-service teachers perceive effective teaching and Black student learning will likely prove illustrative of where the greatest change in teacher-student relationships can occur. This study’s importance begins with its potential to unlock teachers’ ability to improve their craft efficiently by aligning their beliefs

about student learning with effective professional development training. In order to answer my research questions, a concise methodological approach was utilized to target the self-generated constructs that current Ohio teachers assign to Black student learning and teacher effectiveness. This approach enables me to collect information that existing literature is lacking and will need to inform teacher education in the future.

### **Methodological Approach**

This study is based on a constructive alternativism philosophy using an approach underpinned by Personal Construct Theory (PCT) and using Repertory Grid (RepGrid) as a data collection technique. While other methods may seem appropriate, it was deemed that the epistemology of Constructive Alternativism (Kelly, 1955) will be more efficient in answering this study's research questions than the other methods available. For example, thematic analysis, the process for encoding qualitative information, was considered (Boyatzis, 2009). Thematic analysis would lead to uncovering conceptual themes that in-service teachers have in common when teaching. However, it would not actually answer what in-service teachers believe are most important to Black student learning nor how their beliefs differ. Furthermore, direct questioning and observations conflicted with my positionality as a Black teacher because of my teacher bias and colleagues' desire to tell me what they thought I wanted to hear as direct questions were asked. Direct questioning also proved difficult for in-service teachers to describe explicit beliefs as it related to Black student learning. Through constructive alternativism, a new understanding of constructs can lead to identifying beliefs that affect effectiveness, which in turn impacts student achievement (Howard, 2014; Jupp, 2013; Sleeter, 2017).

The application of a case study was also considered for studying teacher beliefs and the understanding of cultural pedagogical theory. One particular study by Sleeter (1989) focused on

teachers in Wisconsin because of their history of inclusion of multicultural education and diversity in their teacher education programs. This study looked at the actions of teachers in classroom settings and how teachers responded to diversity. The case study revealed that the inclusion of diversity and multicultural education is not significant enough to reform the interactions between teacher/students to yield academic success for urban black k-12 students (Sleeter, 1989). Case studies are a popular methodological approach used within k-12 teacher studies and like Sleeter's study, can yield important data for educators and teachers. However, the link between what teachers learn and how they think and construct their beliefs when teaching Black k-12 students remains unanswered.

For this reason, a constructivist alternativism approach is used for this study. This approach suggests that individuals "present interpretations of the universe which are subject to revision or replacement" (Kelly, 1955, p. 15). This philosophy assumes that individuals do not experience the universe directly; instead, individuals view the universe "through transparent patterns which they create and then attempt to fit over the realities of which the world is composed" (Kelly, 1955, p. 9). The approach utilized in this study was chosen as an effective way to gain an understanding of each respondent's educational beliefs and perspective of priorities and foci in the classroom while teaching Black students.

Constructivism alternativism states that "all of our present interpretations of the universe are subject to revision or replacement" (Kelly, 1955, p. 15). This philosophy assumes that individuals do not experience the universe directly. Instead, individuals view the universe "through transparent patterns which they create and then attempt to fit over the realities of which the world is composed" (Kelly, 1955, p. 9). The transparent patterns are called constructs or beliefs. In-service teachers are constantly revising and changing because of the nature of the field



of education. In-service teachers' beliefs about students and learning are constantly being challenged through social dynamics that impact their classrooms. Therefore, constructivism alternativism, as a philosophy, proves appropriate in this study.

As constructed, this study utilizes a mixed methodological design that employs a series of structured interviews to elicit constructs from study participants, contributing to the future rating of these constructs against factors central to my research questions. Creswell and Clark (2011) defined mixed methods research from both a method and philosophical orientation that is based on the premise that the use of both qualitative and quantitative approaches provides a better understanding of a research problem than either methodology alone. This leads to the belief that the research questions lead the study design, participation selection, techniques for data collection, and means of analysis. By critically studying in-service teacher perspectives, the current study design is targeted at capturing and illustrating the realistic personal constructs that are of significance in this context.

### **Personal Construct Theory**

Personal Construct Theory (PCT) was developed for the purpose of understanding psychological behaviors in clinical patients. Kelly (1955) argued that people experience, organize, and describe their environment in terms of personal cognitive constructs (Lemke et al., 2003). Kelly (1955) suggested that human beings made rules or "constructs" to make sense of the world. Constructs are "a way in which two or more things are simultaneously alike and different from one or more things" (Lemke et al., 2003). This points to the complexity of how humans respond to the world around them. Constructs change as more information is received. As a result, they are constantly changing as we continue to navigate our world. This creates difficulty in keeping a gauge on the perspectives of human players within a context.

An understanding of how in-service teachers create and apply constructs in diverse educational settings could potentially contribute to our understanding of how these constructs lead to thinking and behavior patterns within the educational environment. That is, teachers' perspectives and thinking patterns can likely be influenced by the countless factors available to them, including the actions of their effective colleagues in similar environments. The collection and organization of this data may hold value in the pursuit of improving teaching effectiveness in culturally diverse settings. Personal Construct Theory is useful as I try to answer *RQ 2: In what ways do Black and White teachers think the same and differently about what contributes to Black students' learning?* The sharing of personal constructs has implications of both commonality and cognition that is held in common between organizational members and individuality (Simpson, Wilson & Wagner, 1999). For in-service teachers, understanding the similar and different constructs among Black and White in-service teachers could prove useful in education.

Components of PCT include:

1. A belief that all individuals develop and test constructs as a way of explaining and anticipating events.
2. The understanding that many constructs will be constantly updated, as they prove useful or less useful in interpreting events.
3. A view that participants typically differ in how they construe events (although there will be some constructs that will be shared across participants).
4. An understanding that social contexts influence individuals' constructs.
5. The view that if one individual construes an event in a way similar to another, then both of their psychological processes are similar (Lemke et al., 2003, p. 202).

The aforementioned components are central to the mindset or theory proposed by PCT. PCT also asserts that all people are scientists within their own lives because they make hypotheses, evaluate evidence, and revise assumptions (Kelly, 1955). Thus, if teachers become better scientists, they could cope with changes effectively and efficiently (Lemke et al., 2003; Kelly, 1955, p. 12; Procter, 2009). These ideas are aligned with Kelly's belief that progress occurs only through action and willingness to continually experiment with new approaches and useful in change and interpretation of events (Lemke et al., 2003; Kelly, 1955).

This approach is advantageous for this study because in-service teachers are constantly required to adjust and change their teaching methods and practices. McQualter (1985) emphasized this when asserting that "pedagogy is the basis for teacher decision making" (p. 179). Understanding personal constructs are important because in-service teachers' personal constructs are the link between how teachers understand pedagogical knowledge and apply it in the classroom in ways that are meaningful, engaging, and interactive for k-12 Black students. As explained in Chapter II, in-service teachers have fallen short of making the necessary adjustments when teaching Black students for various reasons and can underestimate their self-efficacy and understanding of their abilities to teach Black students (e.g., Dixon & Anderson, 2018; Siwatu et al., 2017; Sleeter, 2016a; Wyatt, 2012). Thus, PCT offers the ability to gain insight into the beliefs and understandings that could enable in-service teachers to make adjustments best suited for k-12 Black students. PCT provides a means for exploring the mindset of a teacher's thinking patterns and beliefs. In order to explore teachers thinking and beliefs, I will use RepGrid as the method to elicit personal constructs.

There has not been much research on in-service teachers' beliefs about Black student learning. However, research on personal constructs in preservice teacher education that focused

on teacher reflexivity has been studied using RepGrid (Simić et al., 2017). Researchers in this study “was guided by the notion that, by returning to the past, it was possible to gain insight into the factors that influenced their professional decisions or shaped current constructions of the teaching profession” (Simić et al., 2017, p. 5). This method discovered deep and insightful factors generated by preservice teachers that would not have been possible to garner through other data collection and organization methods. For example,

For the category of authentic interest, student teachers chose their profession after comprehensive elaborations of personal constructs that usually occurred toward the end of high school. Such student teachers chose their profession after “profound” consideration that fully reflected their values. In that manner, the profession became their personal expression, the reflection of their values and ideals, rather than an externally imposed path. (Simić et al., 2017, p. 6)

As teaching and learning continue to be studied, many of the methodological approaches seem to be confirmatory methods that do not reflect and address the actual thoughts of teachers and students. Scholars such as Abbate-Vaughn (2004), Haberman (2004), and Ladson-Billings (2009) identified typologies of effective and ineffective teachers in their literature; however, these typologies are simply used to confirm the behaviors associated with teacher effectiveness. These typologies do not identify how teachers construct and experience teaching and learning. In fact, the depth of information regarding teacher and student thinking in k-12 educational settings that can be gathered through the utilization of the RepGrid technique may illustrate points of variance between teachers and students that have not been uncovered before—mainly, the thinking patterns of these professionals. RepGrid, within the context of this study, uncovers explicit details about in-service teachers’ thinking patterns. Due to personal and open response

patterns received by RepGrid interviewing, a depth of knowledge can be produced in terms of cultural ways of learning and teaching.

RepGrid also reduces bias, is easy to administer, and “facilitates qualitative and quantitative analysis” (Curtis et al., 2008; p. 38; Hunter & Beck, 2000). RepGrid has been used for research that focuses on decision making for decades (Curtis et al., 2008). In addition, Boose (1988) discussed hundreds of decision-based systems that have been created using the RepGrid. In this overview, he suggested several uses for the RepGrid in creating decision-based systems. Four of those suggestions could provide support to in-service teachers including, “creating decision aids, project exploration, and feasibility tools, teaching aids, and tools that provide situation insight” (Boose, 1988, p. 215). Thus, for this study, the RepGrid technique is the method that will be used to study how in-service teachers think about teaching Black students. The following section will provide an overview of the Repertory Grid Technique and define and explain each of the key parts of the technique.

### **Repertory Grid Technique**

Repertory Grid Technique (RepGrid) was developed by George Kelly (1955) as part of his Personal Construct Theory. This technique is a “highly structured form of interviewing, which leads to a matrix of quantitative data - the repertory grid” (Lemke et al., 2003, p. 200). There are many advantages to using RepGrid as a researcher. RepGrid is highly personal in that the focus is to “discover how participants construct their world, whereas many other survey instruments seek only to confirm what the researcher understands to be the domain of interest” (Curtis et al., 2008, p. 38). RepGrid is also known to provide richer and deeper understandings of units of analysis that are being studied. For example, in Lemke et al.’s 2003 study of “close”

supplier-manufacturer relationships, when research participants were asked a question directly regarding the characteristics of these relationships, the answers were limited in depth of content. The research participants used characteristics such as “Good,” “Open,” which were described by Goffin as “clichés” (Lemke et al., 2003, p. 196). RepGrid technique provided detailed descriptions and explanations of relationship characteristics when used in Goffin’s study. For example, “Makes decisions,” “Flexible,” and “Takes us seriously” were derived when Goffin implemented RepGrid. “RepGrid stimulates respondents to think deeply and move beyond answers based on their immediate reactions” (Lemke et al., 2003, p. 198). Applying RepGrid within the field of education is a way to understand the thinking and beliefs of one of the most important constituents, in-service teachers.

RepGrid was developed as a method used for the benefit of clients and was introduced for eliciting personal construct systems from individuals (Bell, 1990). It is a cognitive mapping approach utilized to assist in understanding how individuals derive meaning in their environment (Curtis et al., 2008; Lemke et al., 2003; Walsh, 1995). RepGrid was initially developed for use in a clinical setting to help diagnose psychiatric conditions and more successfully prescribe treatments (McKnight, 2000). Repertory Grid Technique has five major functions:

It should define the client’s problem in ways that the therapist can use; it should reveal the “pathways and channels” wherein the client might be able to change; it should furnish the therapist with testable clinical hypotheses; it should reveal psychological resources of the client that the therapist might not otherwise detect; and finally it should reveal problems of the client that the therapist might otherwise overlook. (Kelly, 1955, p. 219)

Kelly focused on the practical application of psychology and realities or constructs, lived and created by clients in their daily lives. This practical application has made Kelly’s theory and

technique adaptable to other areas, including education (Curtis et al., 2008; Lemke et al., 2003; Kelly, 1955; Pill, 2005; Simić et al., 2019). The close relationship between psychology and education provides congruence and reason for applying PCT and RepGrid technique to in-service teachers. The data can be used for an exploratory analysis or analyzed further using advanced coding or statistical techniques to answer research questions of interest (Curtis et al., 2008, p. 39; Lemke et al., 2003).

In addition to being a data elicitation technique, RepGrid also enables the data to be organized in helpful ways. This may contribute to a new understanding of constructs which underpins similarities and differences between constructs generated by teachers. Awareness of teachers' constructs about teaching could lead to conversations that offer a lens needed to understand and improve upon teaching and learning in urban settings (Howard, 2014; Jupp, 2013; Sleeter, 2017). By organizing data through RepGrid, the underlying discrepancies between what teachers think about student learning may be illustrated.

RepGrid comprises two primary parts: specific elements and constructs that are elicited from research participants. Elements are the people, objects, or events that are specific and discrete and are a part of the topic chosen by the researcher. Elements can be personal elements, identified by participants, or provided elements, given to the participant (Lemke et al., 2003, p. 203). For example, a participant could choose a personal teaching experience as a personal element, or the researcher could provide a specific teaching experience that they would like the participant to use as a probe in order to elicit constructs. Constructs are derived from rules that people create that help to make sense of situations, people, relationships, and objects. Kelly further defined constructs as a way in which two or more things are alike and, at the same time, different from one or more things (Lemke et al., 2003; Kelly, 1955). Fransella et al. (2004)

further defines constructs (based on Kelly, 1955) as “bipolar dimensions which each person has created and formed into a system through which they interpret their experiences of the world” (p.16). According to Fransella et al. (2004), it is the bipolarity that differentiates a personal construct from a concept. This bipolarity is the foundation on which the interviewing technique is built. The next section describes the validity and reliability of the study.

### **Validity and Reliability of the Study**

Validity and Reliability are essential when conducting research. To ensure validity, it was important for me to review the rep grid protocol that included element collection and construct elicitation. This review included testing the collection of elements and the probing question that would result in construct elicitation during the planning stages. This required conducting pilot interviews to test the clarity and understanding of personal elements and the probing question. This resulted in several iterations of the probing questions and fine tuning the exact question to ask to solicit personal elements. Lemke et al. (2003) suggested that pilot interviews are important to the validity of the RepGrid process.

Reliability involves the measurement of results overtime. Upon validating the element and probing question, I had to ensure that they produced the same results when other relevant factors remain unchanged (Lemke et al., 2003). Thus, I made sure that the question was asked the exact same way for every participant and that the setting was exactly the same. To prevent fatigue on the part of the participants, I kept all interviews within the suggestive time frame per Lemke et al. (2003) at sixty minutes. Although, participants self-reported their beliefs and teaching experiences, to ensure reliability, participants had several opportunities to clarify, change, and adjust their reported constructs and speak freely about their teaching experiences in order to ensure that I as the researcher understood their teaching experience. The next section



describes RepGrid technique within the bounds of my research design, beginning with the sample that was used during the interview process.

### **Research Design**

The research design consisted of conducting 40 RepGrid interviews with in-service teachers across Ohio to determine their aggregated beliefs about what is important when teaching Black students. The resulting data were analyzed in two ways: first, by aggregating all 40 RepGrids, and secondly, by analyzing the RepGrids of the White and Black teachers separately. The research design includes the sample used for this study and the RepGrid process that they participated in during this study.

### ***Sample Size***

The sample size is important to research; however, it is difficult to define when conducting qualitative research. When using the repertory grid (RepGrid) technique, sample sizes are often relatively small because of the intense structure of the interview (Tan & Hunter, 2002). Lemke et al. (2003) suggested sample sizes of 20 to 30 within a population. Other scholars suggest a sample size of 15 to 25 within a population. Scholars that implement RepGrid agree that sufficient constructs need to be elicited to approximate the “universe of meaning” regarding a given domain of discourse (Dunn et al., 1986; Ginsberg, 1989; Lemke et al., 2003; Tan & Hunter, 2002, p. 9). This suggests that no new constructs are usually added even if the sample size is increased beyond this point. The goal of qualitative research is not necessarily to obtain large sample sizes but to reach saturation with rich data. Partington and Cranfield School of Management (2002) described the occurrence of theoretical saturation as “when no new categories or properties are found, and all further instances of data merely add to the bulk of specific instances of already-discovered categories and properties” (p. 151). In addition, studies

using RepGrid with a small sample size can be used to develop items for larger sample instruments such as questionnaires.

### ***Sample Population***

Interviews were conducted with 40 respondents across the state of Ohio. For equal comparison and to meet the adequate sample size of 20 to 30 for each data set (Lemke et al., 2003), 20 Black teachers and 20 White teachers were interviewed. Eligibility criteria for participation in the study included having at least five years of teaching experience, history of teaching within an urban school setting, history of teaching grades k-12, and personal, racial identification of either Black or White. Fourteen Black female teachers, 6 Black male teachers, 19 White Female teachers, and 1 White male teacher satisfied this criterion. In this study, the first research question (RQ1) asked: What do k-12 in-service teachers deem to be important while learning in an urban school setting? This question helps to define my sample population as in-service teachers in k-12th that work in an urban school district. In order to answer my research questions, it was decided that Ohio comprised sufficient diversity to facilitate this research project. Through the collection of data from both Black and White educators, the study enabled the analysis of both teachers' (in general) beliefs, as well as Black and White teachers' beliefs separately.

### ***Age and Average Years of Teaching***

As outlined in Table 3.1, the age range varied across Black teachers and aligned with their average years of teaching. Table 3.2 outlines the participant data for White teachers.

**Table 3.1***Age Range and Average Years of Teaching of Black Teachers*

Age Range	Number of Respondents	Percentage	Avg. Years of Teaching
25-35	5	25%	6. 6 years
36-45	9	45%	12.2 years
46-55	5	25%	20.6 years
56-65	1	5%	34 years

**Table 3.2***Age Range and Average Years of Teaching of White Teachers*

Age Range	Number of Respondents	Percentage	Avg. Years of Teaching
25-35	6	30%	5.8 years
36-45	11	55%	17 years
46-55	3	15%	24 years
56-65	0	0%	0

Although this study does not ask research questions directly related to age, this demographic information is important in understanding the correlation between age and years of teaching of each respondent.

### ***Grades Taught***

Out of the 20 Black teachers, nine had predominantly taught in elementary school, six in middle school, and five in high school. Alternatively, nine White teachers taught in elementary three in middle school, and eight in high school.

The participant demographics are important to understand the population of teachers that shared their beliefs and constructs during this research study. All respondents are referred to by their race and assigned number only. This helps maintain teacher anonymity. For example, I refer to respondents as Black in-service teachers or B2 which represents the 2<sup>nd</sup> Black teacher interviewed, and White in-service teachers or W22 which represents the 22<sup>nd</sup> White teacher interviewed.

### ***Sample Recruitment***

For in-service teachers, the sample was recruited using a snowballing effect based on responses gathered from social media sites and direct emails. An example of recruitment material is listed in Appendix A. Upon the recruitment of respondents, interviews were conducted using the repertory grid structure, beginning with the selection of elements or teaching experiences.

### **Elements**

It was important for participants to refer to experiences that were personal for them therefore, I chose to have personal elements created by the research participants. Having research participants provide elements helps to reduce bias and allows for elements to be representative of the area being investigated (Fransella et al., 2004; Lemke et al., 2003). This suggests that the elements (teaching experiences) must be familiar to the respondents. The following guidelines should be used when deciding on elements:

1. Elements should be specific and discrete (for example, people, objects, or events) in order to avoid confusing the participant.
2. Simple, clear elements support effective interviewing.
3. The set of elements should be relatively homogeneous – for example, mixing people and objects may cause confusion.
4. Elements should avoid any value judgments, as these increase the potential for misunderstanding.
5. The participant must be familiar with the elements.
6. Most importantly, the elements must be appropriate to the topic being studied.

(Lemke et al., 2003, p. 203)

As aforementioned, I focused on personal elements that would be provoked in response to a written prompt that focuses on teaching experiences. This prompt was provided by the interviewer. For example, participants could describe a teaching experience that involved a student learning a part of the curriculum or an experience that a student's focus was on outside influences during class instruction. These experiences represent the lived experiences of in-service teachers, thus they varied in recorded responses. This written prompt is within the RepGrid protocol (Appendix B). The literature suggests that for a repertory grid to be effective, at least six elements are required (Lemke et al., 2003). The identified elements (teaching experiences) were specific experiences that had occurred while teaching Black students within urban classrooms and left a lasting impression on in-service teachers.

Personal elements are identified by participants and are, therefore, familiar and unique to them; that is, the set of elements named is likely to be specific to each participant. However, due to their shared environments, there may be some commonality amongst the generated elements

(teaching experiences; Lemke et al., 2003). Thus, having my sample population from the same State and type of school district was important to this study in that their commonalities allowed for further comparison between participants, which helped to answer my second research question.

### **Selection of Elements**

Respondents selected their elements on their own. Respondents were given 24–48 hours to think of six teaching experiences that left a lasting impression on them and were asked to bring them to the interview. This approach was taken to give them some time to think about teaching experiences that were memorable to them throughout their teaching career.

Respondents were asked to write down each of the six specific teaching experiences on a 5x8 index card with a corresponding letter between A-F next to each experience. A teaching experience represents anything that occurred during classroom instructional time and left a lasting impression on the respondent. For example, a respondent wrote down a teaching experience in which they described a time that they taught a lesson that students responded in a positive manner. They called this element “engaged.” Another respondent wrote down a teaching experience in which the administration came into class during instructional time and negatively interrupted the respondent while teaching. They called this element “administration blues.” Each respondent described in detail six elements (teaching experiences) that left a lasting impression on them as in-service teachers. Lemke et al. (2003) posited that “elements must be selected to fit with the aims of the investigation” (p. 204). Thus, having the elements be teaching experiences while teaching Black students is pertinent to research question one.

For each of the six personal elements, respondents were asked to explain their teaching experiences to elicit as much contextual information as possible for each teaching experience.

Follow up-questions were only pertinent for clarifying and defining the element's contextual significance. Elements were then presented as a triad, a group of three, and presented in order during the interview process. Table 3.3 shows the order of the element presentations. For example, element index cards A, C, and E were presented to respondents as the first group of three that were used to elicit constructs. The asterisk next to the letter represents the order used when presenting the triads to the respondents.

**Table 3.3**

*Presentation of Elements*

<b>Elements</b>						
	<b>a</b>	<b>b</b>	<b>c</b>	<b>d</b>	<b>e</b>	<b>f</b>
1	*		*		*	1
2	*		*			*
3	*			*	*	3
4	*			*		*
5		*	*		*	5
6		*	*			*
7		*		*	*	7

**Interview Process**

The interview process followed a structured format that included three main parts:

1. Repertory Grid Protocol
2. Repertory Grid Question and Triad Presentations
3. Rating of the Repertory Grid

Each part was followed precisely according to Lemke et al.'s (2003) approach for interviewing using the RepGrid technique. The following sections detail each step of the interview process.



### ***Repertory Grid Protocol***

The repertory grid protocol (Appendix B) is important for the purpose of setting the guidelines and probing questions for the interviewing process. It entails a description of the phenomenon being studied and probing questions for the collection of personal elements for the interview. The RepGrid protocol also provides a strict format to follow during the interview process. In addition, a copy of the Letter of Informed Consent was provided to the respondent as a partial requirement for ethical approval of the research by Antioch University. Sending out the repertory grid protocol allowed the respondent time to consider their personal elements (teaching experiences) ahead of the interview. Although it was not required for respondents to send back their elements before the interview, it helped to reduce any anxiety that could have occurred if respondents were asked to come up with their selections during the interview. Upon having all documents signed and elements available, the repertory grid question and triad presentations occurred.

### ***Ethical Protections***

The nuisances and constant change within the field of education, keeps in-service teachers in constant uncertainty (Sleeter, 2016b). Because of this, it was important to remain ethical throughout this study to ensure the trust and job security of in-service teachers. To ensure the privacy of in-service teachers that were interviewed they were only identified by an ID code that I created. As a researcher and current teacher, I did not interview any teacher that I work with or have worked with in the past.

My research plan and informed consent documents were approved by Antioch University's Institutional Review Board (IRB) in March 2020. Informed consent forms were obtained from participants before interviewing them that covered the data collection process and

the RepGrid protocol. Recordings of interviews were stored in a password protected computer and will be deleted after the dissertation is published. Interviews were conducted via zoom in my private office.

### ***Repertory Grid Question and Triad Presentations***

With the exception of the first, face to face, interview, all interviews in this study were conducted over video conference through Zoom. This was not the original plan, but because of an international COVID-19 pandemic, it required all interviews to take place virtually. Respondents were comfortable with this change.

Interviews lasted roughly 60 minutes, and an effort was made to limit their length beyond this. Lemke et al. (2003) suggested that interviews should last no longer than 60 minutes to avoid participant fatigue, and the transition to video conference was acknowledged as an additional contributing factor to potential fatigue. Respondents were sent a zoom invitation along with the repertory grid protocol and were asked to scan or mail the letter of Informed Consent (Appendix C) back to the researcher prior to their interview time. Once the researcher confirmed the receipt of the signed Informed Consent, the researcher signed it and reminded the respondent that the interview would be recorded per their written consent. The interview then began with the researcher asking the demographic questions. Once these questions were completed, the researcher explained briefly how the Repertory Grid Technique works and then proceeded to the RepGrid section of the interview (Part 3 of the Interview Process). The process used for the RepGrid part of the interview followed the basic structure that Lemke et al. (2003) suggested, which includes the following six steps:

1. Ask Rep Grid question
2. Group elements

3. Identify “Construct” & “Pole”
4. Probe Construct & Pole
5. Rate Elements
6. Document

The RepGrid Process began with the researcher asking the respondent to write down one to two words that represented each element (teaching experience) that they thought about prior to the interview. They were written on an index card with a corresponding letter. The researcher collected each card and then proceeded to ask the respondent to give details about each teaching experience. The researcher emphasized to give enough detail so that the researcher could understand the experience. Once this was completed, the presenting of the first triad occurred.

As mentioned above, the triads and their order had been preselected. The first three letters representing teaching experiences were requested by the researcher for the respondent to view. Because this was conducted on zoom, both the researcher and the respondent had the teaching experiences and the corresponding letters in front of them during the interview. The researcher then read the RepGrid question:

Considering these three teaching experiences, please think about how two of these experiences are similar, and thereby different from the third, in regard to enabling Black students to learn?

The respondent was then asked to identify and describe the “construct” that made the two teaching experiences similar. They were then asked to identify what they would consider being the opposite or “pole construct” that was identified with the third element—that which made it different. The interviewee was then probed for more information on both the “construct” and the “pole” so that they were clearly described. The researcher strived to have a single



Figure 3.1 is the RepGrid template used to record each respondent's personal constructs. It also includes personal elements that are represented by the letters a through f. The construct and construct pole were written directly on each respondent's RepGrid as soon as they were elicited. After each construct and its construct pole were elicited, the respondent was then asked to rate each of the six triad elements against the construct and construct pole. Respondents clarified, changed, and edited their RepGrid to ensure it aligned with what they were conveying. Once the construct and construct poles were documented, each respondent rated their personal elements against their personal constructs.

### ***Rating of the Repertory Grid***

Upon the completion of a RepGrid, it was presented to the respondent to be rated. When using the RepGrid technique, both the ranking of the elements and nominal rating can be used. However, the rating was Kelly's original method. Lemke et al. (2003) posited, "Ratings are more commonly used, as they can be easily analyzed" (p. 206). Lemke et al. (2003) recommended that a five-point scale is appropriate for studies such as this; "With more points on the scale, extra time is required to rate the elements, and this can become boring for the participant" (p. 207). In-service teachers are already cumbered with tedious work, so having a five-point scale proved advantageous for this study. The scale is defined by the "construct" and the "pole," providing the two extremities of the scale (e.g., Construct = 1, Pole = 5). Each respondent was given the opportunity to review and change their repertory grids before the completion of the interview. The rating represents how the participant believed that the construct was present within each teaching experience. Respondents were able to have the same rating for each teaching experience or any number between 1 and 5. An example grid is below in Figure 3.2.

**Figure 3.2**

*Example of a Respondent's Repertory Grid*

**ELEMENTS:** 6 Personal Teaching Experiences (lettered a-f)

**CONSTRUCT:** 7 personal constructs (numbered 1-7)

**RATINGS:** 5-point scale (1 on L; 5 on R)

18 B		Elements							
Construct (score 1)		a	b	c	d	e	f	Construct POLE (score 5)	
Having relatable content	1	1	4	1	3	5	4	1	Non relatable content
Including students lived experience	2	2	2	1	5	5	3	2	Curriculum based learning
Collaborative student learning	3	2	1	2	5	5	3	3	Independent student learning
Mastery assessment	4	1	2	2	3	3	2	4	Grade based assessment
Reflective practices	5	3	2	1	4	4	2	5	Teacher not taking feedback
Student development practices	6	2	2	2	4	3	3	6	Teacher developed practices
Mutual vulnerability	7	2	3	2	5	5	4	7	Mutual non-disclosure

This example shows that the 18<sup>th</sup> participant was a Black respondent, and in order for Black students to learn, they believed the constructs 1-7 were important. When asked to rate each construct against each element (teaching experience), looking at construct 1, this participant rated experience “a” and “c” as having relatable content during the experience, which led to the learning of Black students. Whereas experience “b,” “e,” and “f” did not include relatable content, and students did not learn well according to the participant’s beliefs.

### Summary

In total, 40 grids were generated, 20 that represent Black in-service teachers’ constructs, and 20 that represent White in-service teachers’ constructs. Two different analyses were then conducted: one which aggregated the data from all 40 repertory grids, and a second analysis

which analyzed the Black and White teachers' grids separately. Each RepGrid consisted of seven constructs (teachers' beliefs about what enables Black students to learn) and construct poles (teachers' opposite beliefs to the construct about what enables a Black student to learn). In addition, there were six elements (teachers' provided teaching experiences) that were rated against each construct. This resulted in 42 data items in each grid for a total of 1,680 data items across all grids. There were also recordings of each interview, which provided additional qualitative data of descriptions and clarification made throughout the RepGrid interview process. The analysis and results of this data are discussed in Chapter IV.

## Chapter IV: Analysis and Results

Chapter IV focuses on the analysis of data collected using the Repertory Grid (RepGrid) technique. This study uses the RepGrid technique for the purpose of aiming for an in-depth understanding of teachers' beliefs about what enables Black students to learn (Jankowicz, 2004). To answer my first research question, which asked, "*What do k-12 in-service teachers deem to be important while teaching Black students in an urban school setting?*" I first analyzed all in-service teachers' interviews and individual RepGrids.

The data were initially analyzed as one large group to answer my first research question stated above. Following that analysis, data were segmented into two groups by race to answer my second research question, "*In what ways do Black and White teachers think the same, and differently about what contributes to Black students' learning?*"

Using procedures offered by Lemke et al. (2003) and Jankowicz (2004), this chapter includes an analysis of collected data which involved three steps:

- Data collection and validation
- Analysis of Repertory Grid Data, and
- Analysis of Repertory Grid data of Two Subsamples

Within each step, the results of the analysis are reported.

### Data Collection and Validation

Prior to the analysis of the RepGrids, the data collected during the interviews were transcribed and prepared for analysis. Interviews were transcribed using a transcription software and then reviewed and edited by hand. For any questions about each transcription, the recorded interview was consulted to clarify any details. After the conclusion of the interview, each individual RepGrid was loaded into an Excel spreadsheet with a separate grid for each



respondent. Each respondent's grid contained the constructs and construct poles as well as the ratings of the elements.

Following the validation of the RepGrid data, the recorded interview that detailed each respondent's six personal teaching experiences (elements), as well as the RepGrid data, were transcribed into a Word document. The researcher carried out all the interview transcriptions using a transcription software and then edited each transcription.

### **Analysis of Repertory Grid Data**

Analysis of Repertory Grid data relies on the personal uniqueness of each respondent's beliefs. Each elicited construct is very personal and unique, which is the basis for Kelly's Personal Construct Theory (Fransella et al., 2004). Each personal construct allows the researcher to have an overview of the content reported by each individual respondent, but to carry out further analysis; it is necessary to reduce the number of constructs. This can be done by finding common categories amongst the constructs and compiling a listing of "Common Categories/Constructs" based on these common categories.

Lemke et al. (2003) and Jankowicz (2004) suggested the following four steps. Each step will be elaborated further in its own section.

1. Core-Categorization Procedure: "A technique in which the individual constructs of all the respondents are pooled and categorized according to the meanings they express" (Jankowicz, 2004, p. 148). Through the core-categorization procedure, individual constructs are placed in a single category. This category becomes a common construct through the aggregation of each individual construct that is placed with the associated category.

2. Reduction of Constructs: Through the core-categorization individual constructs were reduced to common constructs for all 40 respondents. The common constructs were then validated by a second researcher.
3. Calculation of overall and unique frequency of the common constructs: This calculation shows how many times each construct fits into the common constructs and how many individual respondents mentioned the common constructs.
4. Identifying Key Constructs: This calculation shows the Average Normal Variability among the common constructs. It is the variability or spread amongst the ratings of the elements (Lemke et al., 2003; Raja et al., 2013). The greater the spread, the greater the interviewee differentiates between the elements (teaching experiences).

### **Core-Categorization Procedure**

The core-categorization procedure is also called a bootstrapping technique. Jankowicz (2004) described this technique as an approach in which a category system is developed “on the hoof” (p. 148). This means that constructs are selected randomly and put together under a similar category that is created on the spot. The purpose of using the core-categorization procedure is to help recognize and classify similarities and differences among respondents’ constructs. It allows for the aggregation of the meanings in the entire sample, “while classifying some individual meanings as similar, and others as different” (Jankowicz, 2004, p. 149). For this reason, all 280 constructs and their poles in this study were aggregated with the aim to preserve the teachers’ personal meanings using steps described by Jankowicz (2004). The following approach was used to categorize the 280 individual constructs. Each construct being categorized was compared with the others, and then:

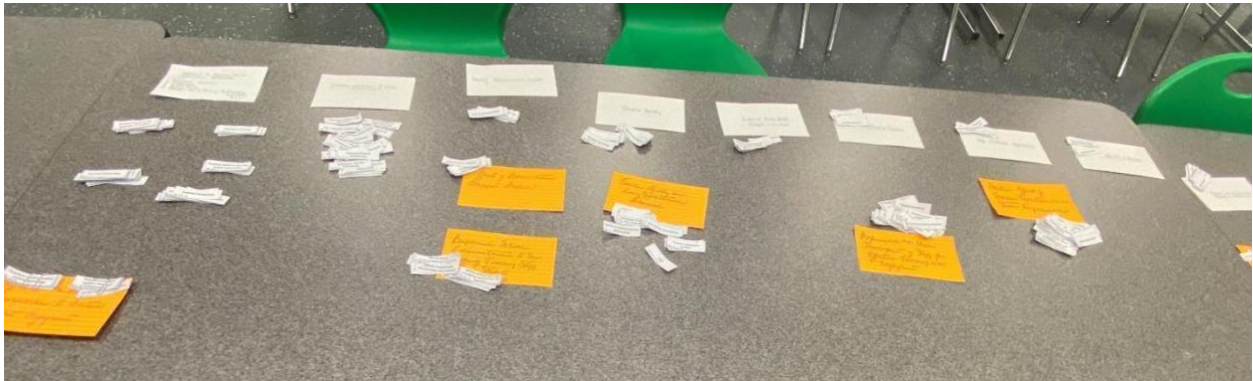
1. All 280 constructs were placed in a bowl.

2. One construct at a time was pulled out of the bowl. If a construct is in some way was like the first construct, the two were placed together under a single category created for them at that very moment.
3. If a construct was different from the first construct, the construct was put into a separate category.
4. The remaining constructs were compared with each of the categories and allocated to the appropriate one if an appropriate category existed. If not, one was created. If necessary, existing categories were redefined, combined, or broken up.
5. This process continued until all constructs were classified.

Figure 4.1 illustrates an example of how the core-categorization procedure that was conducted. The procedure included several iterations for reliability purposes by the primary researcher.

#### **Figure 4.1**

##### *Core-Categorization Procedure*



*Photograph copyright by author*

### ***Reduction of Constructs***

This procedure resulted in an initial 18 primary categories, also known as Primary Common Constructs. The results were tabulated and put into a table. Table 4.1 provides the tabulated results of the initial primary categorization conducted by the primary researcher.

**Table 4.1**

#### ***Initial Primary Categories/Constructs***

1	Lack of Culture Knowledge and Competence in Teaching Diverse Students
2	Professional and Skills Development of Staff for Effective Teaching and Engagement
3	Responsive School Administration to the Needs of Teaching Staff and Students
4	Effective and Responsive Approach to Positive Student Engagement
5	Positive Effects of Teacher Expectations and Student Responsiveness
6	Teacher Apathy and Low Behavioral Expectations of Students
7	Parental Responsibility and Active Involvement
8	Lack of Parental Participation in Student Education
9	Specific Aspects and Results of Curriculum Structures and Current Educational Models
10	Ingredients for Student School Failure (Contributes to Student not doing well)
11	Factors that Affect Negative School Climate (cultural unresponsiveness)
12	Effects of Student Apathy and Lack of Academic Motivation and Teacher Expectations
13	Effect of Administrative support failure
14	Community Relationship Building

- 15        What Teachers Do to Make a difference in the Educational Experiences of their Students
- 16        Teacher Apathy and Lack of Educational Preparedness and Student Responsiveness
- 17        Effects of Trauma and Mental Health on Student Proficiency
- 18        Ineffective School administrative Policies

The initial list of primary constructs was indicative of the individual personal constructs that best fit into the category by using a core-categorization procedure. In some cases, the personal constructs, as described, contained more than one construct. These particular constructs are called complex or secondary common constructs (Piddock, 2017). The purpose of deciding to categorize the individual constructs into more complex or secondary constructs is because some of the respondents' personal constructs were so different in meaning that it became necessary to split them so that they could be placed in their own categories.

A complex construct could be put into two distinct and disassociated categories. Once a complex construct was split the construct then became a primary common category/construct and a secondary common category/construct. These complex constructs were divided so that there was only a single construct described in each. The resulting "simple constructs" could then be placed into the appropriate category. For example, a personal construct was described as "Teachers knowing and understanding student obstacles (caring), so they will not become teachers that do not care about students and only care about their teaching jobs and test scores." They were split and placed in two distinct categories "caring" and "teacher apathy." The single construct could not fit into just one category because this respondent talked about knowing and understanding students by caring about them so that they would not just focus on test scores. Thus, "caring" became the Primary Common Construct, and "teacher apathy" became the

Secondary Common Construct because the respondent was also referring to teachers becoming apathetic toward students. This process resulted in “teacher apathy” and “standard-based education” as common categories/constructs as well.

After completing the initial primary and secondary categorization of the individual constructs, I conducted a set of reliability checks. First, I wanted to make sure that the initial categorizes had stability, which meant the “extent to which the results were invariant over time” (Jankowicz, 2004, p. 150). Thus, I repeated the core procedure two additional times to ensure that my initial results met stable reliability.

Next, I conducted a reproducibility reliability check to ensure other people could make the same sense of personal constructs as I did. This involved asking a colleague that is familiar with education and teaching to categorize all 280 constructs alone using the same procedure as I had used. The process resulted in two sets of common construct categories, with an initial reliability score of 62% or an exact match of 175 of 280 constructs.

By using an iterative process, similarities and differences between the two sets of categories were documented. This led to categories being split and merged based on consensus between myself and my colleague. Ultimately, the categorization procedure resulted in 20 common construct categories, with a reliability index of 85%. Ensuring that there was high reliability is an important procedure in order to ensure reproducibility. That is, the personal constructs could be placed in the common categories/ common constructs by other individuals as my colleague, and I placed them. A sample of the reliability process is found in Appendix E.

In order to ensure that personal constructs were categorized properly, it became necessary for my colleague and me to define the constructs and the construct’s pole. During the reliability process, my colleague and I had conversations about what we both agreed and disagreed on in

relation to the category names and definitions. Those conversations led to 20 categories and definitions, which ultimately became the primary common constructs.

The definitions were interpreted and derived from respondents' interview transcriptions by my colleague and me. For example, the primary construct "teacher inclusion of lived experiences" construct was defined as the "inclusion of the whole student and their experiences in the classroom." The construct pole was defined as "the disregard of a student's life experience during classroom instruction." Both definitions were based on respondents' explanations of the elicited construct and construct poles during the interview. An example of one interview that helped develop the above definitions is as follows:

Prioritizing students' diverse experiences and explorations of the world is important for them to learn. We cannot not allow students' experiences to be in the classroom. Teachers teach from their experiences so students should be able to learn from their experiences  
-B2.

In some cases, the categories that had initially appeared clear became somewhat unclear. For example, "professional and skills development of staff" was defined to focus on teacher flexibility, teacher reflection, equity, and antiracism, versus "reflective practices," which tried to capture in-service teacher's ability to recognize their personal "aha" moments during class instruction that required them to adjust their teaching instruction or class activity to help students learn. With consecutive iterations during the categorization process, some of the original categories were modified, and definitions clarified.

The final list of common categories/constructs (20) and definitions, as well as examples of constructs and the construct poles that fit into the Primary Category/Common Constructs, are below in Table 4.2.

**Table 4.2***Primary Category/Common Constructs and Construct Poles and Definitions*

	<b>Primary Category Common Constructs</b>	<b>Construct Definition</b>	<b>Construct</b>	<b>Construct Pole Definition</b>	<b>Construct Pole</b>
1	Professional and Skills Development (PSD) of Staff	PSD focused on teacher flexibility, teacher reflection, equity, and antiracism	Building teacher awareness of implicit bias	Teaching fragmented or standardized/more Eurocentric base, being implicitly bias	Fragmented teaching/only Eurocentric base, bias teaching
2	Effects of Teacher Expectations on Student Responsiveness	Student response to teacher expectations	A student engaging in content because of Teacher/student relationship	Teachers not having the ability to influence students	Teachers and students lack of effort and relationship
3	Impacts of Administrative Responsiveness and Supports	Administrators ability to allow teacher autonomy, antiracist work, and support of high expectations	Administration giving teacher flexibility and creativity and support	Administration having rigid systems of academic learning and discipline, disregarding antiracist work, and having low expectations for learning	Standardized teaching and learning
4	Teacher Inclusion of Lived Experiences	Teachers ability to include and make room of student's personal life in the classroom	Valuing the Whole student	Teacher's disregard of student's life experiences	Disregarding students' whole life
5	Caring	Teachers ability to care for students beyond academics	Teachers providing additional social/emotional support	Teachers not providing social/emotional support beyond the classroom	Teachers not caring for students beyond academics
6	Trust	Teachers ability to gain the trust of students with personal issues	Teacher building trust and respect w/students	Teachers not taking the time to get to know students on a personal level	A teacher not building trust with students
7	Immediate and Extended Family Relationships	Teachers ability to have meaningful ongoing relationships with student's family	Teachers understanding extended family is important	Teachers inability to have meaningful, ongoing relationships with student's family	Teachers not being connected and available to the family.



	<b>Primary Category Common Constructs</b>	<b>Construct Definition</b>	<b>Construct</b>	<b>Construct Pole Definition</b>	<b>Construct Pole</b>
8	Student Voice	Teachers ability to include students a voice in classroom instruction and activity	A student in voice/choice	Teachers choosing to limit students voice in classroom instruction and activity	Teachers limiting student voice/choice
9	Academic Engagement	Teachers ability to engage students during classroom instruction and activity	Student enjoying education	Teachers inability to engage students during classroom instruction and activity	Student strong dislike of education
10	Cultural Knowledge and Competence in Teaching Diverse Students	Teachers understanding all aspects of student's ethnic culture and antiracism	Cultural Knowledge and Competence in Teaching Diverse Students	Teachers Not understanding all aspects of student's ethnic culture and anti-racism	Denial of or ignoring stereotypes
11	Parental Responsibility and Active Involvement	Parents being responsible for student's attendance and helping to complete academic assignments.	Positive parental influence and involvement	Parents not being responsible for student's attendance and helping to complete academic assignments.	Negative and lack of parental involvement and influence
12	Teacher High Academic Expectations	Teachers who focus solely on a student's academic achievement.	Teachers taking responsibility for relationships and rigor	Teachers who are open to diverse aspects of learning	Teachers being apathetic
13	Teacher Educational Preparedness and Student Responsiveness	Teachers being prepared with class management skills and student personal lives.	Consistency and Structure in a classroom	Teachers not being prepared with class management skills and student personal lives.	Chaotic Classroom
14	Community Relationship Building	Teachers building relationships with community and organizations that benefit students	Working with community partners	Teachers not building relationships with community and organizations that benefit students	Not working with or involving community partners
15	Effect of Student Apathy on Academic Motivation	The effects of student apathy on academic motivation	Students being ready to work and socialize	The lack of effects of student apathy on academic motivation	Unable to socialize and not ready to work
16	Lack of Mental Health Support and Services	Mental health support in schools	Students having mental support	Lack of mental health support in schools	Students mental health ignored

	<b>Primary Category Common Constructs</b>	<b>Construct Definition</b>	<b>Construct</b>	<b>Construct Pole Definition</b>	<b>Construct Pole</b>
17	Standard Based Education	Mass standards and group learning practices	Standard-based curriculum	Individualized learning practices	Teacher based curriculum
18	Reflective Practices	Teacher individual “aha” moments during instruction	Teachers being patient and reflecting in the moment to make changes during instruction	A teacher who does not pause and reflect during instruction	Impatience and not reflecting in the moment to make changes during instruction
19	Teacher Apathy	Teacher’s intentional behavior that results from training, support, and antiracism work	Teacher intentionality	Teacher’s apathetic behavior that results from a lack of training, support, and racism	The teacher does not try
20	Equity and Access	Students having access to equitable education	Individualized Teaching Strategies and supports for students	Students not having access to equitable education	Generalized teaching Strategies and supports for students

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Table 4.2 gives a snapshot of how personal constructs were categorized into common constructs during the bootstrapping process. Definitions were derived from the researcher’s interpretations of the meanings of the personal constructs elicited. Upon aggregating the data into common constructs, the first analysis was conducted.

### ***Frequency Analysis***

Upon the completion of the reliability test, the next step in discovering the answer to my first research question involved calculating the frequency of occurrence of the common constructs. Frequency of occurrence of common constructs is the first step in making sense of multiple grids

(Lemke et al., 2003). It is the next step that leads to answering my research objective of *“Identifying the constructs consistently associated with reported teaching and learning experiences.”*

When calculating the overall frequency of occurrences of the common constructs, each respondent’s individual RepGrid, replaced the corresponding common construct. This allowed for the creation of a new RepGrid for each respondent, which was composed of common constructs defined by the researcher and my colleague who acted as a secondary researcher during the bootstrapping process. Those common constructs replaced the respondent’s personal constructs but still maintained the elements (teaching experiences) and the elements ratings. Thus, the common constructs grids could then be analyzed and compared using the software tool Idiogrid. Figure 4.2 is illustrative of a RepGrid that has both Primary and Secondary Common Categories/Constructs with the original individual personal construct and construct pole.

**Figure 4.2***Example Grid of a Respondent with Common Constructs*

	<b>Primary Common Construct</b>	<b>Secondary Common Construct</b>	<b>Construct 1</b>	<b>A</b>	<b>B</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>D</b>	<b>E</b>	<b>F</b>	<b>Construct Pole 5</b>
1	Impacts of Administrative Responsiveness and Supports		Having Relatable Content	1	4	1	3	5	4	Non relatable content
2	Teacher Inclusion of Lived Experiences	Standard Based Education	Including student lived experiences	2	2	1	5	5	3	Curriculum-based learning
3	Impacts of Administrative Responsiveness and Supports	Standard Based Education	Collaborative Learning	2	1	2	5	5	3	Independent Learning
4	Professional and Skills Development of Staff	Standard Based Education	Mastery Assessment	1	2	2	3	3	2	Grade Based Assessment
5	Professional and Skills Development of Staff	Reflective Practices	Reflective Practices	3	2	1	4	4	2	Teachers not Taking Feedback
6	Effects of Teachers Expectations on Student Responsiveness		Student Development Practices	2	2	2	4	3	3	Teacher developed practices
7	Trust	Teacher Apathy	Mutual Vulnerability	2	3	2	5	5	4	Mutual Nondisclosure

Figure 4.2 is important because it shows bipolar distinctions of the respondents' personal constructs, and the primary and secondary categories they were placed into by the researcher. It provides an example of the type of personal constructs that make up the primary and secondary constructs and is illustrative of the frequency of the common constructs/categories per respondent. For example, the common construct, "Impacts of Administrative Responsiveness and Supports," had two frequencies among this respondent. Through the aggregation of each respondent's RepGrid, frequency is calculated for all 20 common constructs.

The calculation of frequency or the number of times that a construct was elicited enables inferences to be made about how many times a respondent mentioned a particular construct. Research suggests that in order for a common construct to be deemed as important, the common construct must reach a frequency threshold of 25% or higher (Lemke et al., 2003; Goffin & Koners, 2011; Raja et al., 2013). Based on 40 respondents, a 25% threshold would require at least ten overall and unique mentions of a particular construct by the respondents.

The calculation of the overall and unique frequency was conducted by hand. It involved combining constructs from each individual RepGrid and indicates the total number of occurrences of the common construct. For example, the common construct, "Professional and Skills Development of Staff" was mentioned 32 times across 40 respondents. Figure 4.3 illustrates the difference between the overall frequency and the unique frequency of the 11 common constructs that met the threshold of frequency.

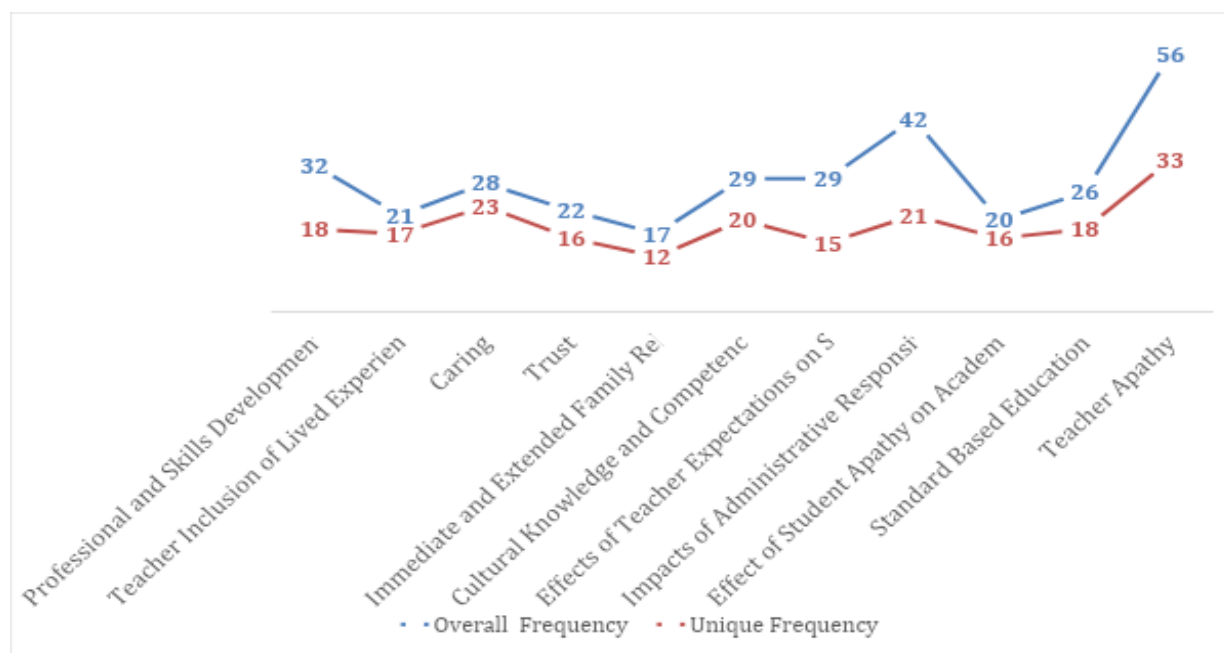
**Figure 4. 3***Overall and Unique Frequency*

Figure 4.3 shows the discrepancy of the constructs that were mentioned versus how many respondents mentioned the construct. This is important because it illustrates which constructs gained the highest percentage rate among respondents. For example, “teacher apathy” had 56 mentions, and 83% of respondents believed that it impacted Black students’ learning. The construct’s impacts of administrative responsiveness and supports were mentioned 42 times, and 53% of respondents believed that it impacted Black students’ learning. This contrasts with the construct, “immediate and extended family relationships,” which was only mentioned 17 times, and only 30% of respondents believed that it impacted Black students’ learning. The difference in construct mentions and the number of respondents help give an overview of which constructs were important enough to mention and how many respondents mentioned each construct that met the frequency threshold.

Unique Frequency indicates the number of unique mentions of a Common Construct by a respondent. In other words, if a common construct was found two or more times in a respondent grid, only one (unique) mention was counted. This means the maximum unique frequency would be 40 (number of respondents). For the construct, “professional and skills development of staff,” only 18 respondents mentioned it at least once. This calculation suggests that the common construct, “professional and skills development of staff,” had a unique frequency rate of 45% across all in-service teachers and was mentioned 11% of the time during the interview process.

There are 11 common constructs that achieved the unique frequency threshold for in-service teachers. They are as follows:

1. Professional and Skills Development of Staff
2. Teacher Inclusion of Lived Experiences
3. Caring
4. Trust
5. Immediate and Extended Family Relationships
6. Cultural Knowledge and Competence in Teaching Diverse Students
7. Effects of Teacher Expectations on Student Responsiveness
8. Impacts of Administrative Responsiveness and Supports
9. Effect of Student Apathy on Academic Motivation
10. Standard Based Education
11. Teacher Apathy

This indicates that across the 40 in-service teachers that were interviewed, the above 11 common constructs were consistently associated with reported teaching experiences. These

constructs partly answer my first research question: “*What do k-12 in-service teachers deem to be important while teaching Black students in an urban school setting?*”

In order to answer my first research question fully, an additional analysis was conducted. Frequency is only one indicator that signals the importance of a common construct. Calculating the variability amongst the ratings of the elements (teacher experiences) can take a common construct and raise it to a level known as a key construct, or most important construct (Goffin et al., 2006). When a common construct becomes a key construct, it suggests that the participant not only mentioned the construct, but they also differentiated the construct among their teaching experiences. In order to be a key construct, the common construct must have both frequency and variability.

#### ***Average Normal Variability Analysis***

Following the method as set out by Lemke et al. (2003) and Goffin et al. (2006), the first step to identify key constructs was to determine the overall average normal variability (ANV) for all grids for comparison purposes. There are seven constructs/grid. The ANV, calculated for all grids, was then calculated as  $100\% (\text{Total Variability})/7$ , which is  $\text{constructs/grid} = 17.5$ . Therefore, the average normalized variability (ANV) calculated for each Common Construct must exceed 17.5 to meet the threshold for defining a Key Construct.

In order to calculate the ANVs for each construct, the RepGrids were individually loaded into the repertory grid analysis software tool, Idiogrid. Descriptive Statistics were then run on each of the separate grids, which calculated the percent total sum of squares (%TTS) for each construct. The ANV for each construct was calculated as follows:



$$ANV = \text{Construct \% Total Sum of Squares (\%TTS)} * \# \text{ of Constructs in the Grid} /$$

$$(\text{Average \# of Constructs/Grid})$$
 Therefore, a Construct with a %TTS = 19.87 (From Idiogrid) with the number of Constructs in the Grid = 7.

$$\text{Average number of Constructs/Grid} = \text{Total Constructs/Total Number of Grids} = 280/40$$

$$= 7$$

$$ANV = 19.87 * 7 / 7 = 19.87.$$

Following the calculation of the ANV for each Common Construct in each grid, the Common Constructs were aggregated, and the ANV across all grids were calculated. This resulted in four constructs that were now raised to the level of key or most important constructs among respondents. The four key constructs are:

- Professional and Skills Development of Staff
- Teacher Inclusion of Lived Experiences
- Caring
- Trust

Thus, out of the 20 common constructs and the 11 common constructs that met the frequency threshold, only four common constructs were key across all 40 respondents by meeting the unique frequency threshold as well as showing variability within their teaching experiences. The results indicate that in-service teachers' belief about what enables Black students to learn in a classroom setting involves a combination of the following common constructs: "professional and skills development of staff," "teacher inclusion of lived experiences," "caring," and "trust." Those four constructs are the most salient to Black students learning across all 40 respondents, according to this study. Figure 4.4 illustrates the percentage of in-service teachers' key constructs that met the unique frequency threshold.

**Figure 4.4**

*Percentage of Unique Frequency of Key Constructs*

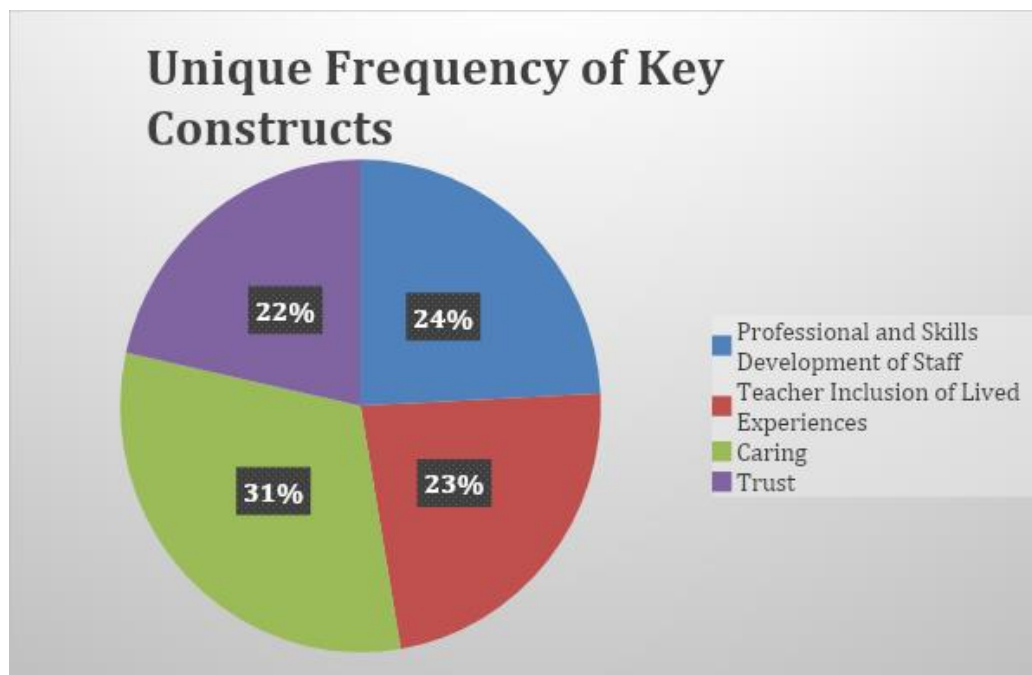


Figure 4.4 indicates that the four key constructs had almost equal occurrences among the 40 in-service teachers, with a 1% unique frequency difference between constructs, “trust,” “teacher inclusion of lived experiences,” and “professional and skills development of staff.” The construct “caring” had unique frequencies among the key constructs. However, all four key constructs had variability of 20% or higher among teaching experiences. “Teacher inclusion of lived experiences” had the highest variability of rate of 21.95. Therefore, all four key constructs are significant to in-service teachers’ beliefs about what enables Black students to learn.

Table 4.3 gives an overview that includes the 20 Common Constructs derived from constructs and constructs poles, their definitions, the 11 common constructs that met the overall and unique frequency threshold, and four key constructs that met the average normal variability across all 40 Respondents.

**Table 4.3***Primary Common Constructs Frequency Table*

	<b>Common Construct Category</b>	<b>Construct Definition</b>	<b>Construct Pole Definition</b>	<b>Overall Frequency &gt; = 10</b>	<b>UF &gt; = 10</b>	<b>ANV &gt; = 19.87</b>
1	Professional and Skills Development of Staff	PD focused on teacher flexibility, teacher reflection, equity, and antiracism	Teaching fragmented or standardized/more Eurocentric base, being implicitly bias	36	18	20.6
2	Teacher Inclusion of Lived Experiences	Teachers ability to include and make room of student's personal life in the classroom	Teachers disregard of student's life experiences	21	17	21.95
3	Caring	Teachers ability to care for students beyond academics	Teachers not providing social/emotional support beyond the classroom	28	23	20.5
4	Trust	Teachers ability to gain the trust of students with personal issues	Teachers not taking the time to get to know students on a personal level	22	16	21.01
5	Immediate and Extended Family Relationships	Teachers ability to have meaningful ongoing relationships with student's family	Not being connected and available to the family with the student's family	17	12	19.43

	<b>Common Construct Category</b>	<b>Construct Definition</b>	<b>Construct Pole Definition</b>	<b>Overall Frequency &gt; = 10</b>	<b>UF &gt; = 10</b>	<b>ANV &gt; = 19.87</b>
6	Cultural Knowledge and Competence in Teaching Diverse Students	Understanding and including all aspects of student's ethnic culture	Denial of or ignoring students' culture;	29	20	18.5
7	Academic Engagement	Teachers ability to engage students during classroom instruction and activity	Teachers inability to engage students during classroom instruction and activity	13	9	23.7
8	Teacher High Academic Expectations	Teachers who focus solely on a student's academic achievement.	Teachers who are open to diverse aspects of learning	10	8	22.14
9	Reflective Practices	Teacher individual aha moments that advance learning	A teacher not being mindful of individual aha moments that advance learning	9	6	17.8
10	Student Voice	Teachers ability to include students voice in classroom instruction and activity	Teachers refusal to include students voice in classroom instruction and activity	6	5	17.68
11	Parental Responsibility and Active Involvement	Parents being responsible for student's attendance and helping to complete academic assignments.	Parents not being responsible for student's attendance and helping to complete academic assignments.	7	6	19.43

	<b>Common Construct Category</b>	<b>Construct Definition</b>	<b>Construct Pole Definition</b>	<b>Overall Frequency &gt; = 10</b>	<b>UF &gt; = 10</b>	<b>ANV &gt; = 19.87</b>
12	Effects of Teacher Expectations on Student Responsiveness	Student response to teacher expectations	Teachers not having the ability to influence students	29	15	18
13	Impacts of Administrative Responsiveness and Supports	Administrators ability to allow teacher autonomy, antiracist work, and support of high expectations	Administration having rigid systems of academic learning and discipline, disregarding antiracist work, and having low expectations for learning	42	21	18.5
14	Teacher Educational Preparedness and Student Responsiveness	Teachers being prepared with class management skills and student personal lives.	Teachers not being prepared with class management skills and student personal lives.	4	4	18.7
15	Community Relationship Building	Teachers building relationships with community and organizations that benefit students	Teachers not building relationships with community and organizations that benefit students	3	3	0
16	Effect of Student Apathy on Academic Motivation	Reasons that increase student apathy on academic motivation	Reasons that cause student apathy on academic motivation	20	16	17.9
17	Lack of Mental Health Support and Services	Importance of mental health support in schools	Lack of importance of mental health support in schools	4	3	0

	Common Construct Category	Construct Definition	Construct Pole Definition	Overall Frequency $\geq 10$	UF $\geq 10$	ANV $\geq 19.87$
18	Standard Based Education	Mass standards and group learning practices	Student-centered learning and individual learning practices	26	18	18.7
19	Teacher Apathy	Teacher's apathetic behavior that results from a lack of training, support, and racism	Teacher's behavior driving by training, enthusiasm, and determination to help students learn despite student's life or circumstances	56	33	14.96
20	Equity and Access	Students having access to equitable education	Students not having access to equitable education	4	3	15.4

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**Key Construct** = Average ANV  $\geq 19.87$  + Construct meets frequency threshold Freq  $\geq 10$

Construct meets frequency threshold Freq  $\geq 10$ ,

Construct does not meet the frequency threshold- Freq  $< 10$

The area in Table 4.3 shaded in grey represents the key constructs that met the threshold for overall unique frequencies and average normal variability for in-service teachers, indicating the importance of the construct. The blue shaded common constructs met the frequency threshold of greater than ten occurrences. The non-shaded common constructs in Table 4.3 would be excluded as they did not either reach the threshold of a frequency greater than ten and they did not reach the average normal variability of 19.87. This means that in-service teachers believed that the common constructs shaded in grey were the most important factors in enabling Black students to learn. The blue shaded constructs may have been important to mention and had frequency but did not have variability across their teaching experiences to rise to the level of a key construct. Moreover, the non-shaded constructs did not have significant variability nor frequency.

In summary, by calculating the unique frequency and the average normal variability, my first research question, “*What do in-service teachers deem to be important while teaching Black students in an urban school setting?*” was fully answered. Through the analysis of unique frequencies and average normal variability, I found that the following four common constructs were indicated to be key and important among all 40 respondents. This answers my research objective that required me to identify the constructs consistently associated with reported teaching experiences.

- Professional and Skills Development of Staff
- Teacher Inclusion of Lived Experiences
- Caring
- Trust

These findings will be discussed more fully in Chapter V within the discussion section. However, there is one more analysis that examines the respondents' preference of either the construct or the construct pole of the key constructs.

### ***Preference Analysis***

A final analysis of the key constructs was performed to determine whether the respondents' alignment was more towards the "construct" or the "construct pole." This was done by averaging the ratings of each key construct and dividing the result by the frequency of the key construct to give a percentage preferred construct score.

$$Pcc' = 100\% - \frac{200\% * Dcc'}{(m - 1)E}$$

Where:

Pcc' = Percentage Similarity Score

Dcc' = Sum of Differences

m = Maximum possible rating, "5."

E = Total number of elements, "6."

(m-1) = The largest possible difference between the ratings

(m-1)E = The largest possible sum of differences between the constructs in the whole grid

The Reversed Sum of Differences was also calculated, substituting the Derc' for the Dcc' in the formula. The percentage preferred construct pole was also calculated. Table 4.4 illustrates the key constructs and their pole preferences. The Table also defines the key constructs and the construct poles. Additionally, it provides a summary of the overall and unique frequency of each key construct and its average normal variability.



**Table 4.4**

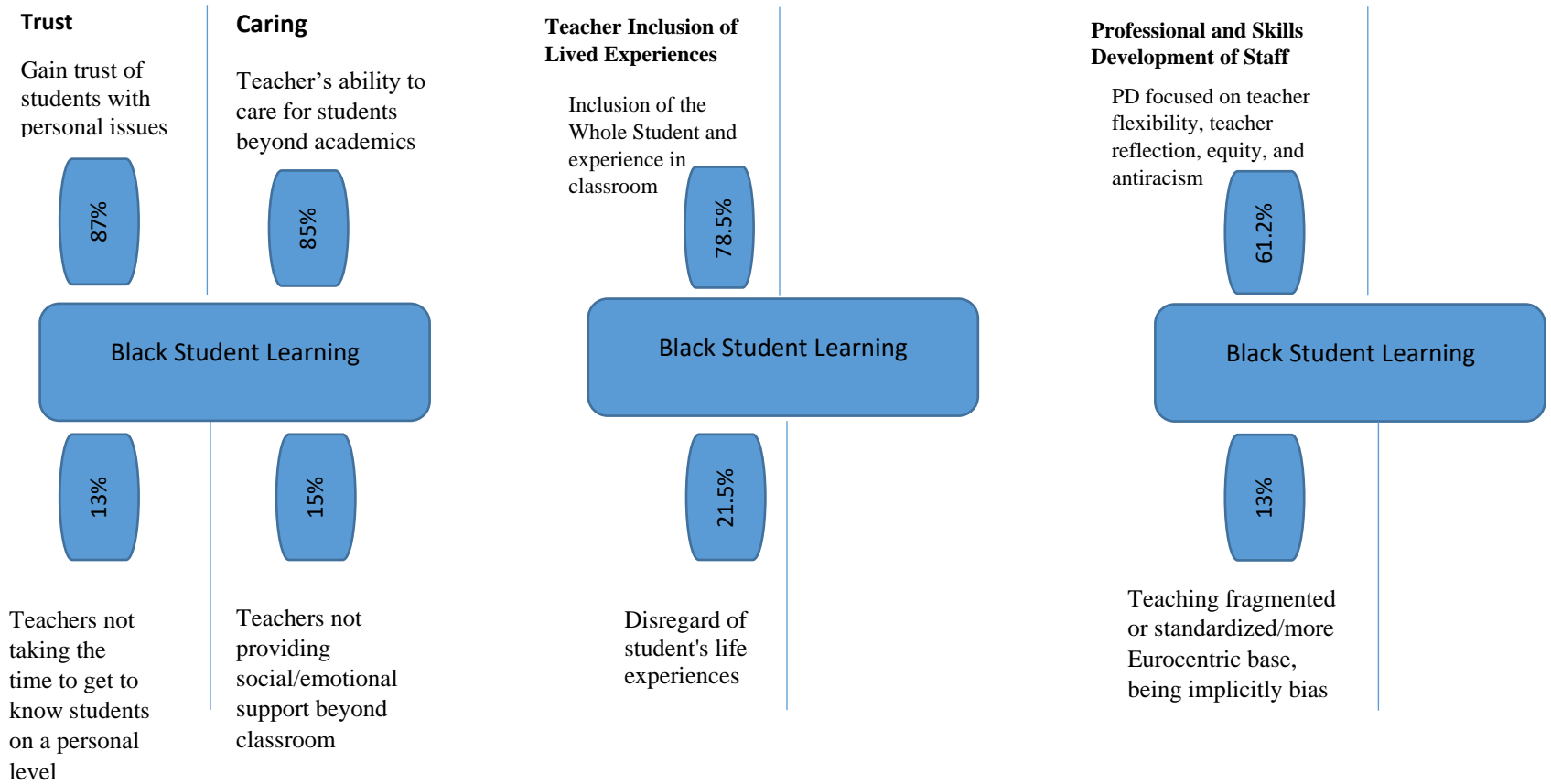
*Summary of Key Constructs with Construct-Pole Pairs and Preference*

	<b>Key Constructs</b>	<b>Frequency of Occurrence</b>	<b>Construct Definition</b>	<b>% Preferred construct</b>	<b>Construct Pole Definition</b>	<b>% Preferred Pole</b>	<b>Overall Frequency &gt; = 10</b>	<b>UF &gt; = 10</b>	<b>ANV &gt; = 19.87</b>
1	Professional and Skills Development of Staff	32	PD focused on teacher flexibility, teacher reflection, equity, and antiracism	61.2%	Teaching fragmented or standardized/more Eurocentric base, being implicitly bias	38.8%	32	18	20.6
2	Teacher Inclusion of Lived Experiences	21	Inclusion of the Whole Student and experience in a classroom	78.5%	Disregard of student's life experiences	21.5%	21	17	21.95
3	Caring	28	Teachers ability to care for students beyond academics	85%	Teachers not providing social/emotional support beyond the classroom	15%	28	23	20.5
4	Trust	22	Teachers ability to gain the trust of students with personal issues	87%	Teachers not taking the time to get to know students on a personal level	13%	22	16	21.01

The results of the analysis of the preference for the “construct” or the “pole” indicate that for three of the key constructs, there was at least a 79% preference for the construct over the pole. This analysis strengthens the answer to my research objective: *“Identifying the constructs consistently associated with reported teaching and learning experiences.”* Figure 4.5 illustrates key constructs and the preferred association with Black student learning.

**Figure 4.5**

*Bipolar Representation of Key Constructs and Respondents Preferences*



Respondents not only believed that these key constructs were important, but they also preferred them in their teaching experiences and consistently associated with these key constructs during their teaching experiences. The key construct “trust” had the highest preference, followed by “caring.” “Inclusion of lived experiences” had the next highest preference, and “professional and skills development of staff” had the lowest preference at just 61.2% across all 40 respondents. For example, in regard to the common construct category of “caring,” the respondents deemed 85% of all elements of teaching experiences related to a teacher’s ability to care for students beyond academics; this construct definition was thus highly associated with encouraging and improving Black student learning. The implications of this result will be discussed further in the Findings and Discussion chapter.

### **Analysis of Two Sub Samples**

In order to answer my second research question, *“In what ways do Black and White teachers think the same, and differently about what contributes to Black students’ learning?”*, I analyzed the RepGrid data by looking at Black and White teachers separately. This investigation differentiates constructs that are similar and different between Black and White teachers. Based on existing literature by (Gay 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995b; Sleeter, 2016b) that suggest teacher whiteness and bias keep culturally responsive strategies out of the classroom. One of my beliefs in conducting the study was that Black and White teachers have different perceptions about what enables Black students to learn. This was upheld by my research through the analysis conducted on my two subsamples. This analysis includes the overall and unique frequency for both subsamples as well as the Average Normal Variability (ANV).

### ***Frequency Analysis of Sub Sample***

In order to answer my second research question, a subsample of the respondents' data was analyzed. This still allowed for an appropriate sample population of at least 20 for each subsample, as outlined by Goffin (2006). The first analysis that I conducted was an overall and unique frequency data analysis. Using the same 20 common constructs that were derived for the entire data set, I sought to understand the similar and different factors contributing to Black student learning. Unlike the entire data set of 40 respondents, to analyze each subgroup, there were 20 respondents for each subgroup. Based on 20 respondents, a 25% frequency threshold would then require at least five overall and unique mentions by the respondents.

There were seven common constructs that reached the frequency threshold for Black respondents and ten common constructs that reached the frequency threshold for White respondents. For example, the construct "professional and skills development of staff" was mentioned 34 times across Black respondents, and 16 out of the 20 Black respondents mentioned it at least once. In contrast, the same construct was mentioned two times across White respondents and had two out of the 20 White respondents mentioned it once. Thus, "professional and skills development of staff" met the frequency threshold for Black respondents, but not for White respondents.

Figure 4.6 compares the most frequent constructs of Black and White respondents and the common constructs that met the unique frequency threshold for the 20 Black and the 20 White respondents. It is important to note that both "teacher apathy" and "standard-based education" were frequently mentioned as constructs for both Black and White respondents.

**Figure 4. 6**

*Most Frequent Common Constructs Unique Frequency*

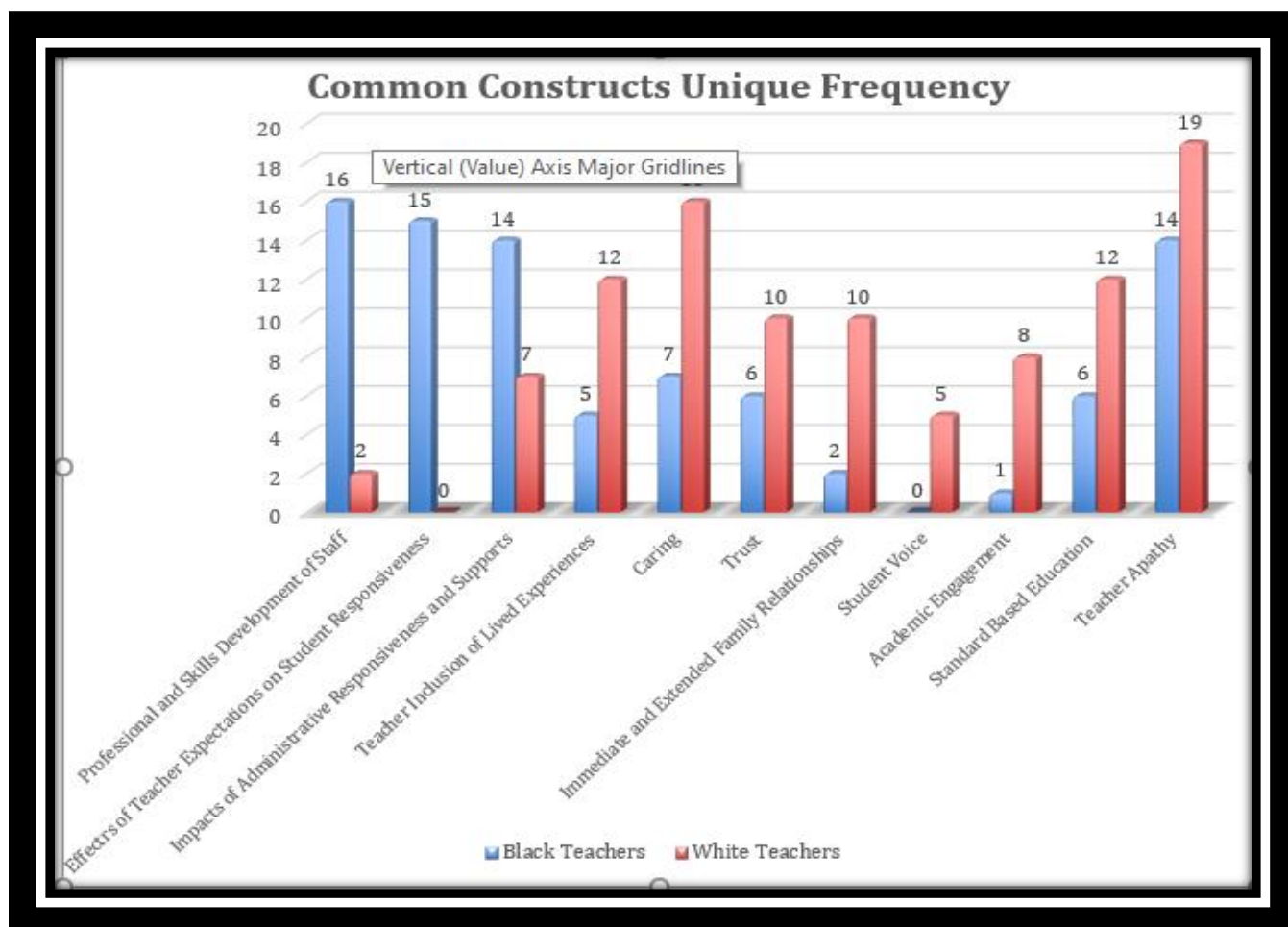


Figure 4.6 reveals vast difference between Black and White respondents, thus indicating that my initial assumption may be correct in that Black and White in-service teachers have different beliefs about what enables Black students to learn. This will be discussed more thoroughly in Chapter V. However, an analysis to determine the variability of each construct must be conducted to help reveal the common constructs that raise to the level of key constructs among Black and White in-service teachers.

### *Average Normalized Variability Analysis of Sub Sample*

Following the calculation of overall and unique frequencies, the ANV for each subgroup was calculated. This is significant because the original 20 constructs were reduced to seven key constructs for Black teachers and eight key constructs for White teachers. Table 4.5 illustrates the distribution of key constructs across Black and White teachers.

**Table 4.5**

*Key Constructs for Black and White In-service Teachers*

	<b>Black In-service Teachers</b>	<b>White In-service Teachers</b>
1	Professional and Skills Development of Staff	Caring
2	Effects of Teacher Expectations on Student Responsiveness	Teacher Inclusion of Lived Experiences
3	Impacts of Administrative Responsiveness and Supports	Trust
4	Teacher Inclusion of Lived Experiences	Immediate and Extended Family Relationships
5	Caring	Academic Engagement
6	Trust	Cultural Knowledge and Competence in Teaching Diverse Students
7	Parental Responsibility and Active Involvement	Teacher High Academic Expectations
8	N/A	Impacts of Administrative Responsiveness and Supports

The key constructs, combined with unique frequencies, describe the constructs that both Black and White teachers believe are most important to enable Black students to learn. Table 4.4 specifies the four key constructs in order of importance that is similar between Black and White respondents. Of significance is the fact that there are four similar key constructs: *caring*, *trust*, *teacher inclusion of lived experiences*, and *impacts of administrative responsiveness and*

*support*. What this suggests is that three key constructs, “caring,” “trust,” and “teacher inclusion of lived experiences” are important constructs to both Black and White teachers as an entire data set and as a subsample. These are indicated in brown highlighting in Table 4.5.

Each subsample believed “impacts of administrative responsiveness and supports,” indicated in blue highlighting in Table 4.5, was important and raised it to the level of a key construct as subsamples, although it was not raised to the level as a key construct among the data set as a whole. Table 4.5 also indicates the constructs which are different between Black and White respondents. This answers my second research question: “*In what ways do Black and White teachers think the same, and differently about what contributes to Black students’ learning?*” Figure 4.7 show the comparison of Black and White respondents’ key constructs and includes the unique frequency and average normal variability of each construct.



**Figure 4.7**

*Combination of Black and White Teachers Unique Frequency and Average Normal Variability*

(ANV)Overall Unique Frequency  $\geq 5$  + Average ANV  $> 14.2$  = Key Construct

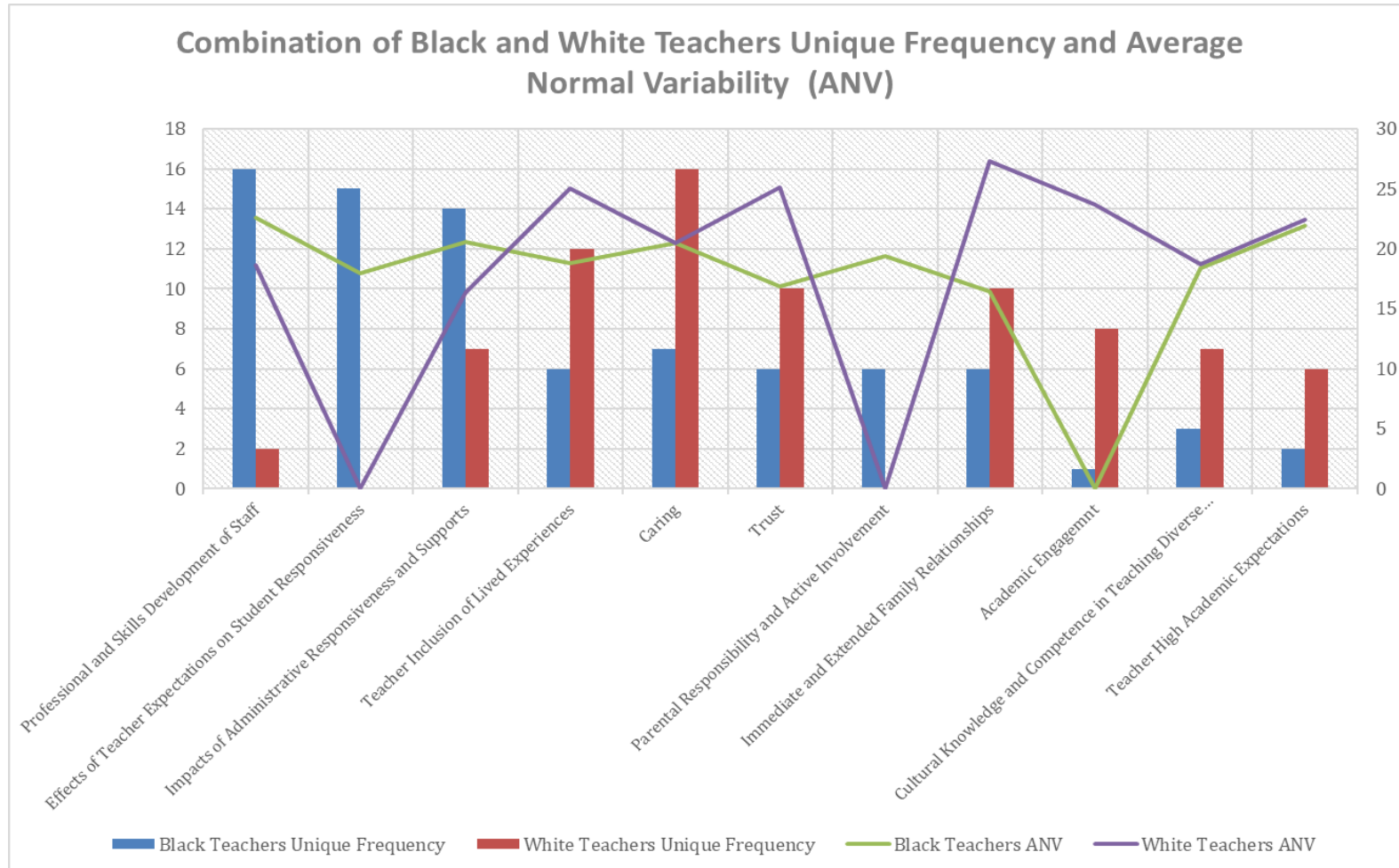


Figure 4.7 indicates that variability across Black in-service teachers was high and steady regardless of the key construct, with the exception of academic engagement, which was not a key construct among Black teachers. In contrast, White in-service teachers' variability varied depending on the key construct. For example, the "impacts of administrative responsiveness and supports" variability was 16.4 versus "immediate and extended family relationships" variability of 27.3. This analysis answers my research objective to "*Identify the constructs consistently associated with each teaching experience.*"

In summary, Table 4.6 provides the overall and unique Frequency; and average normal variability for Black and White In-service Teachers. The Table highlights both similarities and differences among respondents and provides the data that raised the 11 constructs to key constructs among respondents.

**Table 4.6**

*Summary of Overall, Unique Frequency, and Average Normal Variability for Black and White*

*In-service Teachers*

	<b>Primary Common Constructs</b>	<b>Overall Frequency &gt; = 5 Black Respondents</b>	<b>Overall Frequency &gt; = 5 White Respondents</b>	<b>Overall Unique Frequency &gt; = 5 Black Respondents</b>	<b>Overall Unique Frequency &gt; = 5 White Respondents</b>	<b>ANV &gt; 14.2 Black Respondents</b>	<b>ANV &gt; 14.2 White Respondents</b>
1	Professional and Skills Development of Staff	34	2	16	2	22.6	18.63
2	Effects of Teacher Expectations on Student Responsiveness	29	0	15	0	18	0
3	Impacts of Administrative Responsiveness and Supports	33	9	14	7	20.6	16.4
4	Teacher Inclusion of Lived Experiences	6	15	5	12	18.84	25.06
5	Caring	7	21	7	16	20.5	20.5
6	Trust	7	15	6	10	16.9	25.12

	<b>Primary Common Constructs</b>	<b>Overall Frequency &gt; = 5 Black Respondents</b>	<b>Overall Frequency &gt; = 5 White Respondents</b>	<b>Overall Unique Frequency &gt; = 5 Black Respondents</b>	<b>Overall Unique Frequency &gt; = 5 White Respondents</b>	<b>ANV &gt; 14.2 Black Respondents</b>	<b>ANV &gt; 14.2 White Respondents</b>
7	Immediate and Extended Family Relationships	2	14	2	19	16.74	27.3
8	Academic Engagement	1	12	1	8	0	23.7
9	Cultural Knowledge and Competence in Teaching Diverse Students	4	9	3	7	18.4	18.7
10	Parental Responsibility and Active Involvement	7	0	6	0	19.43	0
11	Teacher High Academic Expectations	2	8	2	6	21.9	22.39

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Table 4.6 presents differences among respondents that are significant to reference. The first major difference is how the similar key constructs, “impacts of administrative responsiveness and supports,” varied among Black and White teachers. There were 14 Black teachers compared to seven white teachers that mentioned this key construct in their interviews. During interviews, Black teachers mentioned the need for administrators to trust and support Black teachers in their respective buildings. Black teachers also spoke about the need for administrators to uphold student discipline policies as well as making sure the culture of the school maintained a sense of inclusivity for staff and students. Black teachers also mentioned the prevalence of racism in their respective buildings, which led to the need to “fight” for Black students when it came to academics and discipline. Black teachers overwhelmingly felt that administrators did not support them when trying to advocate for Black students, as evidenced by 70% of Black teachers mentioning this lack of support during their interviews. Comparably, 35% of White teachers focused on administrators making sure that their schools had outside resources for students who may have nonacademic issues.

Another difference is that the data indicates that Black and White teachers each had three different key constructs. Black teachers overwhelmingly believed that the construct, “professional and skills development of staff,” was important to Black students’ learning, with 80% of Black teachers mentioning a construct that fits into this category. Furthermore, those same Black teachers relied on this construct across their teaching experiences at a rate of 22.6, which is 8.4 above the average normal variability. Black respondents made a distinction between the type of professional development they receive and the type they felt teachers needed. In many of the recorded interviews, Black respondents felt that professional development focused on curriculum and engaging students. A few of the Black respondents mentioned professional

developments that stressed having a relationship with students. However, as evident by the following statements, Black respondents emphasized the need for professional development to focus on racism, inclusion of more Black teachers and administrators, teacher reflection and equity.

“Professional Developments don’t meet our needs. Academic engagement is not enough for our students. We need to talk about real stuff, like culture and racism.”-B7

“Instead of giving us PDs that don’t help us, they [Administrators] should be hiring more Black teachers to help the culture.”-B23

“I get that academics is important, but we can’t teach these kids, if we don’t have basic materials. I don’t need to focus on my relationships with students. I can do that. I need people at the top to make it more equitable.” -B14

Black teachers also focused on administrators making sure that the school building maintained professionalism among their staff. This was compared to only 10% of White teachers mentioning a construct that fits into this category.

White teachers exhibited four additional, key constructs that were not shared by Black teachers. The first was “immediate and extended family relationships. This key construct emphasized teachers reporting that knowing students’ immediate and extended family is important to Black students’ learning. Overall, White teachers’ responses indicated that they felt students listened more and were more willing to try when they [teachers] had meaningful relationships with family members.

The other three key constructs that arose from the collection of White teachers' responses were:

- academic engagement,
- cultural knowledge and competence in teaching diverse students,
- teacher high academic expectations.

It is important to note that two of the above mentioned three key constructs focus solely on academic standards. White teachers believed that academic standards must remain high, no matter what the student may be facing. During interviews, White teachers stated the following:

“Students knowing it is okay to be good at more than one thing (sports). Academics must come first.”-W32

“Students being engaged in academics and loving the subject matter, whether they are good at it or not, is important.” -W24

“Students taking responsibility for relationships and rigor of their academic content needs to happen.” -W33

“Relatable, exciting content is needed.” -W21

In summary, the shared key constructs and differences between Black and White in-service teachers give insight into the beliefs that in-service teachers hold about what enables Black students to learn. Although research question two has been partially answered, a final analysis is performed to understand respondents' preferences as they relate to their reported key constructs.

***Preference Analysis of Sub Sample***

As conducted for the entire data set, an analysis of the key constructs was performed to determine whether the preference was more aligned towards the “construct” or the “pole” among the subsamples' key constructs. Table 4.7 specifies the overall frequency and the construct and construct pole definitions. Table 4.7 also provides the percentage preferred construct score for each subgroup.



**Table 4.7***Summary of Key Constructs and pole preference for Each Sub Sample*

	<b>Key Constructs</b>	<b>Black Overall Frequency</b>	<b>White Overall Frequency</b>	<b>Construct Definition</b>	<b>Black % preferred</b>	<b>White % preferred</b>	<b>Construct Pole Definition</b>	<b>Black % preferred</b>	<b>White % preferred</b>
1	Professional and Skills Development of Staff	34	N/A	PD focused on teacher flexibility, teacher reflection, equity, and antiracism	58%	N/A	Teaching fragmented or standardized/more Eurocentric base, being implicitly bias	42%	N/A
2	Teacher Inclusion of Lived Experiences	6	12	Inclusion of the Whole Student and experience in a classroom	99%	98%	Disregard of student's life experiences	1%	2%
3	Caring	7	21	Teachers ability to care for students beyond academics	97%	76.5%	Teachers not providing social/emotional support beyond the classroom	3%	23.5%
4	Trust	7	15	Teachers ability to gain the trust of students with personal issues	98%	98%	Teachers not taking the time to get to know students on a personal level	98%	2%
5	Effects of Teacher Expectations on Student Responsiveness	29	N/A	Student response to teacher expectations	67%	N/A	Teachers not having the ability to influence students	33%	N/A

	Key Constructs	Black Overall Frequency	White Overall Frequency	Construct Definition	Black % preferred	White % preferred	Construct Pole Definition	Black % preferred	White % preferred
6	Impacts of Administrative Responsiveness and Supports	33	9	Administrators ability to allow teacher autonomy, antiracist work, and support of high expectations	64%	96%	administration having rigid systems of academic learning and discipline, disregarding antiracist work, and having low expectations for learning	4%	36%
7	Parental Responsibility and Active Involvement	7	N/A	Parents being responsible for student's attendance and helping to complete academic assignments.	98%	N/A	Parents not being responsible for student's attendance and helping to complete academic assignments.	2%	N/A
8	Immediate and Extended Family Relationships	N/A	14	Teachers ability to have meaningful ongoing relationships with student's family	91%	N/A	Not being connected and available to the family with a student's family	9%	N/A
9	Academic Engagement	N/A	12	Teachers ability to engage students during classroom instruction and activity	N/A	99%	Teachers inability to engage students during classroom instruction and activity	N/A	1%
10	Cultural Knowledge and Competence in Teaching Diverse Students	N/A	9	Understanding and including all aspects of student's ethnic culture	N/A	96%	Denial of or ignoring students' culture;	N/A	4%
11	Teacher High Academic Expectations	N/A	8	Teachers who focus solely on a student's academic achievement.	N/A	99%	Teachers who are open to diverse aspects of learning	N/A	1%

The significance of Table 4.7 is that it highlights the similarities and differences in construct preferences for each subgroup. Both Black and White respondents preferred the key constructs “teacher inclusion of lived experiences” and “trust” 98% over the construct pole. The construct “Impacts of administrative responsiveness and supports” was preferred 64% by Black respondents and 96% by White respondents over the construct pole. This indicates that Black respondents were less likely to prefer the construct over White respondents in their teaching experiences. Black respondents preferred the construct “professional and skills development of staff” 58% over the construct pole. Figure 4.3 provides an overview of the five key constructs identified by respondents and the percentages of their preference toward the construct or construct pole. Overall, respondents have a strong preference for the constructs “caring” and “trust. They have a moderate preference with the construct “teacher inclusion of lived experiences,” and a low preference with the construct, “professionals and skills development of staff.”

### **Summary**

Student performance is commonly associated with teacher development, as indicated by the emphasis on required training modules that educators must complete, as well as the preservice education and certification required to be an educator. However, the existing literature highlights discrepancies between student performance across cultural backgrounds, regardless of this increasingly long list of developmental trainings and cultural pedagogical theory that is available to inform these trainings. While numerous factors have been identified as limiting student performance (e.g., SBE, racism), limited attention has been paid to how their educators view students in differing ethnic groups and how this may impact their interactions with them. The findings of this study suggest that while some key constructs are commonly identified as being significant in educational interactions with Black students, variability does exist across

teachers. Specifically, significant variability was identified when comparing Black teachers with their White colleagues. Chapter V discusses these findings at length.

## Chapter V: Discussion of Findings

The purpose of this study was to uncover beliefs that in-service teachers have about what is important while teaching Black students in urban school settings. The results discussed in Chapter IV bolstered my curiosity regarding the similarities in teaching beliefs between Black and White educators. However, there are also some differences between these groups. In this chapter, I discuss the findings and the nuances that each identified key construct expressed within the recorded responses of respondents. In answering my first research question, “*What do in-service teachers deem to be important while teaching in an urban school setting?*”, the findings reveal that across all 40 respondents, the average response identified the following constructs as the most important (key) constructs believed to enable Black students to learn:

- Professional and Skills Development of Staff
- Teacher Inclusion of Lived Experiences
- Caring
- Trust

The construct definition, mentioned in Chapter IV, for each key construct, is preferred to a great extent over the construct pole definition.

In answering my second research question, “In what ways do Black and White teachers think the same, and differently about what contributes to Black students’ learning?”, key constructs were both similar and different across Black and White respondents when analyzed as subsamples. Three key constructs were identified in the subgroups as well as being found in the total data set; “teacher inclusion of lived experiences,” “caring,” and “trust.” One key construct was shared among Black and White respondents: “Impacts of administrative responsiveness and supports” when their data were analyzed separately. Furthermore, one key construct was found

in the total data set as well as among Black respondents, but not White respondents when the subgroups' data were analyzed individually: "professional and skills development."

While further questioning would be needed to understand the mechanisms behind these differences, the identification of these discrepancies is significant in that it illustrates the variability in the trajectory of approach and mindset between Black and White teachers following pre-service training and education. Consistency and commonality across White and Black teachers will need emphasis in order to bridge inequities in education.

In addition to the above five key constructs that reinforced the commonalities among respondents, there were six different key constructs identified by Black and White respondents. Black respondents identified the following two key constructs:

- Effects of Teacher Expectations on Student Responsiveness
- Parental Responsibility and Active Involvement

White respondents identified the following four key constructs:

- Immediate and Extended Family Relationships
- Academic Engagement
- Teacher's High Academic Expectations
- Cultural Knowledge and Competence in Teaching Diverse Students

In total, 11 constructs are "key." All key constructs discussed in this chapter were key constructs because they met both thresholds of frequency and average normal variability within both analyses conducted. However, when comparing the list of key constructs elicited from Black and White respondents separately, five constructs were identified as being consistent and important across respondents based on their frequency, average normal variability rate, and the results of both analyses. I assert that these key constructs: "caring," "trust," "inclusion of lived

experiences,” “professional and skills development of staff,” and “administrative responsiveness and support” are central to the teachers’ beliefs and how those beliefs impact the academic learning of Black students.

Figure 5.1 illustrates all 11 key constructs presented in this chapter and their ranking of importance based on unique frequency percentages. Key constructs highlighted in black illustrate how they were shared among the different analyses that included subsamples and total data set. Key constructs highlighted in white represent constructs that were different between subsamples and the total data set.

**Figure 5.1**

*Illustration of Key Constructs and Level of Importance Based on Unique Frequency and Average Normal Variability Among Subsamples and Total Data Set*

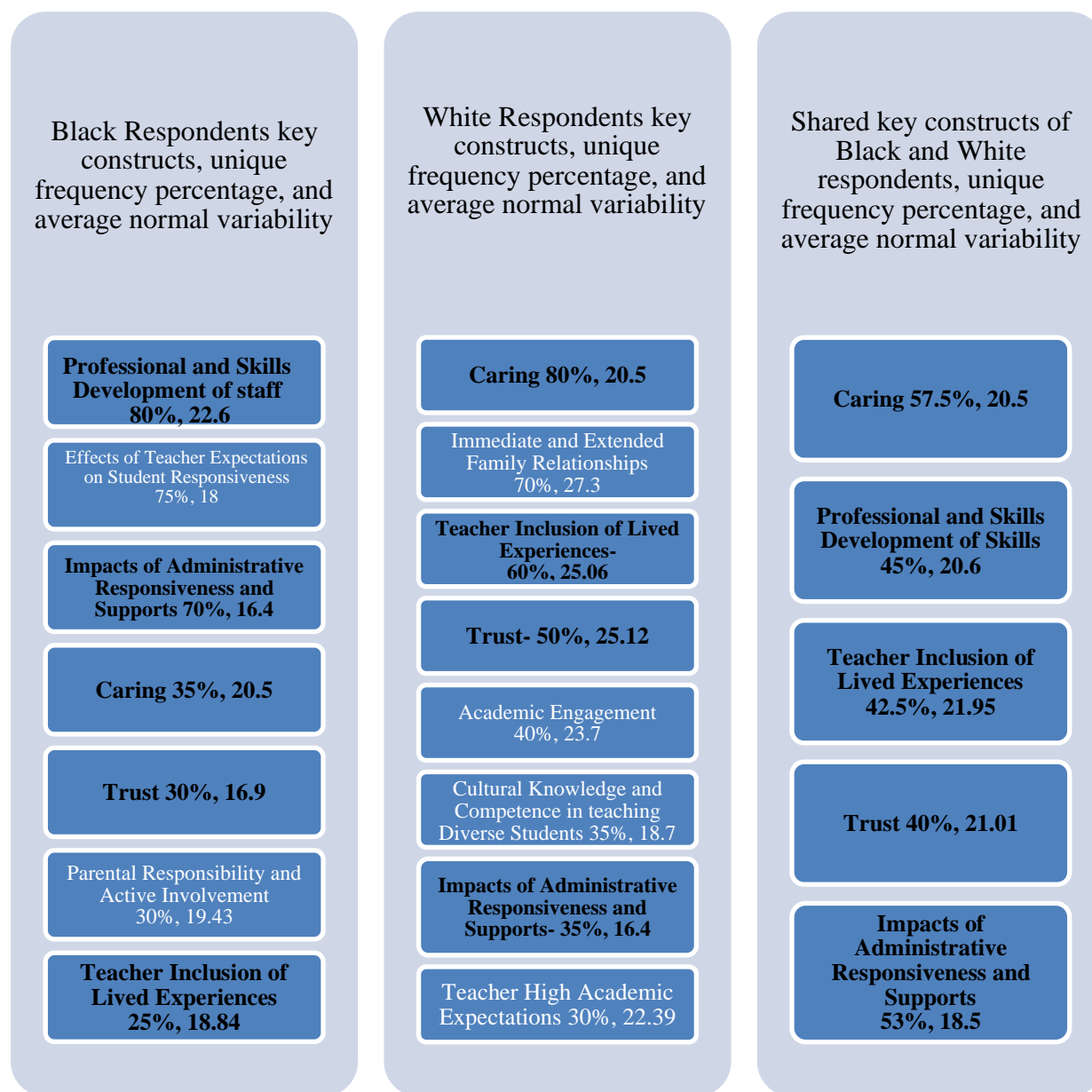


Figure 5.1 provides an overall summary of the findings of this study. It presents the 11 key constructs and how they ranked among respondents according to their unique frequency and average normal variability. The summary also points to percentages representing the number of



individual respondents that raised each construct to the level of key by meeting both thresholds of frequency and average normal variability. In the rest of this chapter I will look at the five shared key constructs and how I am suggesting that they could lead toward a path to increase Black student learning. It is within the shared commonality of key constructs that this study contributes to the notion that when teachers share the same key constructs when teaching students, a systemic approach forms, ensuring culturally competent and collaborative teaching of Black students.

This chapter will also discuss the different key constructs identified by respondents and connect all of the key constructs to existing literature. I will discuss the implications of my findings as well as the limitations of this study and recommendations for further research.

### **Shared Key Constructs Significance**

Both Black and White Respondents shared five constructs. Four of the five constructs were shared across the entire data set: “caring,” “trust,” “inclusion of lived experiences,” and “professional and skills development of staff.” One key construct was solely shared within the subsample data: “impacts of administrative responsiveness and support.” Additionally, one key construct was shared in the entire data set and with Black respondents “professional and skills development of staff”. This section will discuss the significance of each of the five shared key constructs, the similarities, and differences and how they relate to existing literature. My findings indicate that each of the shared key constructs is what Black and White in-service teachers believe enables Black student learning. The findings also identify differences between Black and White respondents. Taken together, I suggest that these key constructs describe a foundation for enhanced Black student learning, a set of values, and a set of skills needed to enable Black students to learn. Although Black and White respondents identified different key constructs, it is

the shared key constructs that add to educational research because they imply that the combination of identified beliefs is needed to move the needle in a positive direction for Black student learning. Thus, I will begin with the shared key construct “caring.”

### ***Construct “Caring”***

The key construct “caring” is supported by existing literature and suggested as an essential factor that “places teachers in an ethical, emotional, and academic partnership with ethnically diverse students” (Gay, 2000, p. 52). The current study illustrated that teachers continue to identify this as an essential factor, and it defined the key construct “caring” as a teacher’s ability to care for students beyond academics. The construct pole is defined as teachers not providing social/emotional support beyond the classroom. As mentioned in Chapter IV, all definitions were created by the researcher and the secondary researcher during the bootstrapping process and gleaned from respondents’ reported interviews.

As a key construct, “caring” was identified by 58% of respondents and had a 20.5% variability rate among all 40 respondents and their teaching experiences. Respondents also preferred the construct “caring” 85% of the time when compared to the construct pole, indicating a marked preference toward the positive aspects of caring. This suggests that respondents find “caring” to be positively associated with Black student learning, a belief that has been discussed in the existing literature as well. For instance, Gay (2000) described caring teachers by their “high-performance expectations, advocacy, and empowerment of students” (p. 62). This ascertains, “caring is a foundational pillar of effective teaching and learning.” (Gay, 2000, p. 62). Gay (2014) asserted that the ethic of caring is vitally crucial to the academic success of Black students. This study supports that notion as both Black and White respondents raised caring to a key construct together and independently.

Although “caring” as a key construct proved vital in this study, the glaring differences between Black and White respondents give pause to how “caring” is perceived depending on the respondent and the personal beliefs they hold. “Caring” as a construct found that 30% of Black respondents and 80% of White respondents met the frequency threshold, and both respondents had a 20.5 variability rate. Black respondents preferred the construct “caring” 97% of the time over the construct pole. White respondents preferred the construct “caring” 76.5% of the time over the construct pole. This data suggests that fewer White respondents preferred caring as a key construct during teaching experiences. Black respondents preferred the construct over the construct pole “caring” 21% more than White respondents.

Black respondents preferred caring at a higher percentage across their teaching experiences more than White respondents, but at a lower frequency rate than White Respondents. Simply put, more White respondents believed that the construct “caring” is essential to Black student learning than Black respondents, but when used across teaching experiences, they varied at the same rate. One way of making sense of this is that White teachers have embraced the notion of caring at a higher percentage rate than Black participants. This supports existing literature by Gay (2014) that suggested caring is essential to Black student achievement. Black respondents reported that “caring” was essential to having relationships with students. Therefore, the respondents’ embrace of the construct “caring” is steeped in the massive research about the importance of having relationships with students and provides what I call a gateway in achieving this endeavor. As evident by respondents, the following statements provide support for the importance of caring.

“Students already know I care about them. I would not have the relationships I have if I did not”-B20

“My relationship with students had a foundation of caring, so caring was most important in getting this student to learn.”-W27

“I cared about their situation. That is why they connected with me, and I was able to get them to learn and participate in class.” -W35

These comments and those that follow by respondents are illustrative of the reported constructs making them anecdotal, but they indicate respondents reasoning for believing in the importance of each construct identified.

### ***Construct “Trust”***

The key construct “trust” is defined as a teacher’s ability to gain the trust of students to the point that they are willing to share personal issues. The construct pole is defined as teachers not taking the time to get to know students on a personal level. As a key construct, “trust” represented 40% of respondents and had a 21% variability rate among their scores. Respondents also preferred the construct “trust” 87% of the time, which indicates a strong preference for the positive aspects of trust.

This result suggests that across all 40 respondents, 40% of the in-service teachers’ variance was slightly above the threshold, meaning that the 40 respondents used the construct “trust” about 21% of the time. They also preferred the construct trust 87% of the time, 2% higher than “caring,” indicating a high association with “trust” for Black student learning. In earlier research, hooks (1994) posited that trust must be mutual and is a vital aspect of teacher/student relationships. This study confirms the importance of trust and the belief that trust is key to enabling Black students to learn. Trust is the byproduct of teacher/student relationships and building rapport. Trust is embedded in culturally responsive teaching as a first step to building a relationship with Black students. Scholars have found that trust is at the epicenter of cultural

pedagogy (Gay, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2014; Warren, 2018). Trust provides yet another gateway for relationships with Black students to occur.

The difference between Black and White respondents was not as vast with the key construct “trust” as it was with the key construct “caring.” In this study, the construct trust found that 30% of Black respondents and 50% of White respondents met the frequency threshold for trust. Black respondents had a 16.9 variability rate, and White respondents had a 25.1 variability rate. Black and White respondents prefer the construct trust 98% of the time over the construct pole. This finding suggests that trust was important among Black and White respondents and had a more robust variability rate among White respondents. Once again, the implication of this finding is that respondents have embraced the notion of trust that existing literature suggests is essential to Black student learning. Respondents reported during interviews the following:

“Trust is important in helping Black students learn because it is the foundation of having a positive relationship with kids.” -W26

“Shoot without trust; you cannot accomplish learning in a classroom. Students have to trust you.” -W24

“This student really began to learn from me when I gained their trust. It helped develop a strong bond and relationship between us. That was important.”-B18

### ***Construct “Teacher Inclusion of Lived Experiences”***

The construct, “teacher inclusion of lived experience,” also proved to be significant in this study. The construct definition is “inclusion of the whole student and experience in the classroom.” The construct pole definition is “disregard of students’ life experiences.” Forty-five percent of total respondents believed that “teacher inclusion of lived experience” was a key construct. Overall, it scored a variability rate of 21.95. The inclusion of students’ lived

experiences moves beyond culture and takes account of each students' daily life. Culture is a shared concept; however, lived experiences are individually based. It is through this acknowledgment that "inclusion of lived experiences" can be impactful within the thought processes of in-service teachers. As scholars have reported, the validation of the student's lived experiences moves toward equitable and inclusive classrooms (Gay, 2010; Ladson-Billings, 1995a). The respondents in this study reported the following:

"You know, Black students learn when teachers recognize students' unique needs. Just because they are all Black does not mean they are the same. We cannot discount students' lives and experiences."-W21

"Equity is so important, but, you know, teachers and schools cannot achieve equity if we keep leaving out students' life and their experience. Bringing students' lives into the classroom helps with engagement as well."-W40

"Including student lived experiences in my classroom has helped tremendously with their learning. I do not want to be graphic, but one of my Black students may have been up all night hearing gunshots, and another may have been getting a book read to them by their parents. I cannot treat both of those students the same when they come into my classroom . . ."-B20

"Teachers' understanding of students' lived experiences really helps Black student learning. My students respond better when I listen and show I understand their daily lives." -B9

The inclusion of lived experiences of both the teacher and the student is believed to be necessary to move the needle of Black student learning (Kumashiro, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 2000, 2006). Equity is underpinned by the inclusion of lived experiences in education. Equity

strengthens the key construct “inclusion of lived experiences” by leveling the educational meeting ground that all students experience during their youth years. Societal success is usually measured by what happens within the microcosm of schooling. Consequently, equitable education becomes vitally important for Black students who face systematic racism daily in and out of school. Equitable education involves taking a deep dive into educational policies created to support the systematic structure of oppression. Systematic oppression is not always overtly displayed within systems, and oppressors manifest in many ways. One way that oppression is displayed within schools’ systems is through the false notion of generosity underpinned by equality. Paulo Freire (1970) postulated:

Any attempt to “soften” the power of the oppressor in deference to the weakness of the oppressed almost always manifests itself in the form of false generosity. In order to have the continued opportunity to express their "generosity," the oppressors must perpetuate injustice as well. An unjust social order is the permanent fount of this "generosity," which is nourished by death, despair, and poverty. Real generosity consists precisely in fighting to destroy the causes which nourish false charity. (p. 45)

Freire (1970) pointed to the need to move beyond equality in education and move toward equity, as discussed in Chapter II. Educational equity must encompass more than the basic notion that school is required and provided. Field et al. (2007) defined equity by describing two dimensions; fairness and inclusion. Equity as fairness implies that personal or socio-economic circumstances, such as gender, ethnic origin, or family background, are not obstacles to educational success. Equity as inclusion means ensuring that all students reach at least a basic minimum level of skills. The lack of equitable schooling leads to educational disparity experienced by Black students, and for Black students, the disparity is wide and deepened when

instructional practices are closely examined. The American school system acknowledges that inequity exists but does not actively implement structures and procedures to eradicate inequities within the current school classrooms. The construct “inclusion of lived experience” highlights the beliefs of in-service teachers in the foundational principles of fairness and a commitment to putting systems in place in their classrooms that ensure that every child has an equal chance for success. By valuing and unpacking the lived experiences of their students, in-service teachers ensure that every student has the individual support that he/she needs to be successful academically, emotionally, and socially.

There was a 98% and 99% preference for the construct over the construct pole for Black and White respondents, respectively. This finding indicated that the preference for the construct was high for both respondents. The inclusion of the whole student and experience in the classroom provides another gateway to achieving a positive relationship with Black students, according to respondents during interviews. As key constructs, “caring,” “trust,” and “the inclusion of lived experiences” prove as significant values that are essential to Black student learning. The implications that all three constructs have on teacher-student relationships lead to a better understanding of what teachers need to form relationships with students that ultimately increase Black student learning.

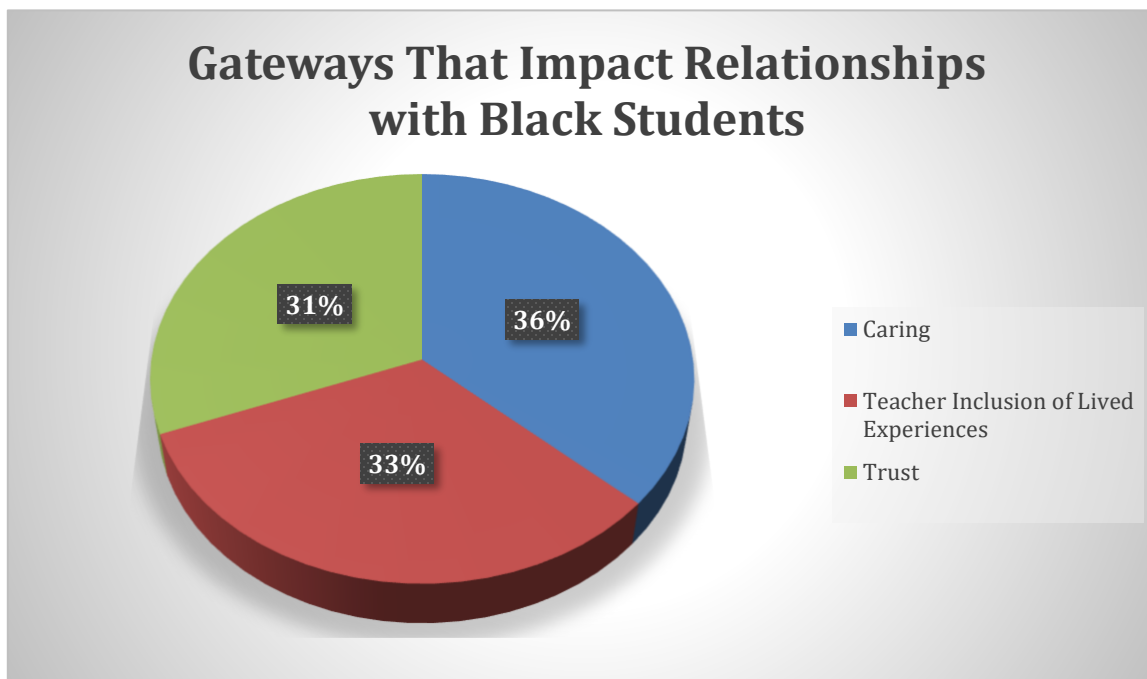
### **Implications for Teacher/Student Relationships**

In this study, there are some indications based on the qualitative data that the constructs “caring,” “trust,” and “inclusion of student lived experiences” are what I term as gateways that can positively impact relationships with Black students. I termed these key constructs as gateways that impact Black students’ learning particularly because the personal accounts of the



respondents provide qualitatively based support for the importance of these constructs, in addition to their importance as indicated by the quantitative data.

The constructs “caring,” “trust,” and “inclusion of lived experiences” were discussed during interviews by Black and White respondents in relation to having positive relationships with students. This is significant because it suggests that positive relationships are created explicitly by caring, trust, and the inclusion of lived experiences. These gateways provide opportunities for in-service teachers to prioritize and understand the values that are needed when trying to form a relationship that will increase Black students’ ability to learn during classroom instruction. As values, these specific key constructs offer opportunities for in-service teachers to connect with Black students in a way that increases student learning. Each gateway is indicative of how respondents define key constructs in relationships with students as a means to increase learning. A logical extension of this finding would be to state that positive relationships between educators and students, as measured by the presence of these factors, would contribute to greater student performance. Figure 5.2 illustrates the key constructs that I have termed gateways to achieving relationships.

**Figure 5.2***Gateways That Impact Relationships with Black Students*

Each segment of Figure 5.2 represents the percentage of Black and White respondents that uniquely mentioned each one as a key construct. Figure 5.2 includes specific constructs that the data indicate are important to in-service teachers to help facilitate Black student learning. These particular key constructs appear to be values that are needed when teaching Black students. When these values are present, respondents believe that Black student learning is positively impacted. As a result, in-service teachers sharing the same values within a school district offers a level of equity that should be central to education and provide a path toward Black student learning. The importance of in-service teachers having shared beliefs and values offers a new lens within k-12 public education literature that customarily focuses on shared goals. According to Gay (2010), an ethic of caring includes some of the following: creating safe educational spaces, allowing student voice to be heard, and “Dealing directly and bluntly with the vicissitudes of racism, and the unequal distribution of power and privilege among diverse

groups” (p. 52). Gay (2010) and many other scholars that implement cultural pedagogical knowledge challenge in-service teachers to have shared goals in order to benefit Black students and increase student achievement. However, my study encourages in-service teachers to develop shared beliefs underpinned by shared goals for transformational change to occur (Banks, 2001; Grant & Sleeter 2011; Ladson-Billings, 2011).

When I observed these particular key constructs it compelled me to consider a framework that provides a pathway based on in-service teachers’ beliefs to Black student learning. It also compelled me to consider how respondents defined these key constructs and their importance as they relate to having relationships with Black students. This is significant because my study suggests that respondents felt teacher/student relationships need to include caring, trust, and the inclusion of lived experiences. These gateways provide opportunities for in-service teachers to prioritize and understand the values that are needed when trying to form relationships that will increase Black students’ ability to learn during classroom instruction. A logical extension of this finding would suggest that relationships between educators and students, as measured by the presence of these factors, would contribute to greater student performance.

As with values, respondents also identified a key construct that I interpret to be skills needed to increase teacher competency and their ability to impact Black student learning positively. In-service teacher skills are comprised of one key construct, “professional and skills development of staff.” The following section detail the importance of this key construct and its connection to existing literature.

### ***Construct “Professional and Skills Development of Staff”***

The last key construct across all 40 respondents is “professional and skills development of staff.” The construct definition is professional development (PD) “PD focused on teacher flexibility, teacher reflection, equity, and antiracism.” The construct pole definition is “teaching fragmented or standardized/more Eurocentric base,” being implicitly biased. Overall, 45% of respondents believed that this construct was key or important to Black student learning. There was a 20.6 variability rate across all 40 respondents teaching experiences. Respondents preferred the construct 61.2% over the construct pole. This indicates that the preference for constructs and construct poles were more closely aligned than for any of the other key constructs. The construct encompasses the need to build skills among in-service teachers, as respondents reported, that focuses specifically on teacher flexibility, teacher reflection, equity, and antiracism is an essential component within teaching experiences. The majority of respondents that indicated this as a key construct also believed that it was underrepresented within their reported teaching experiences.

Although “professional and skills development of staff” was a key construct across the aggregated data from all 40 respondents, it is important to note when looking at subsample data, “professional and skills development of staff” was only a key construct among Black respondents. Eighteen out of twenty or 80% of Black respondents felt that professional developments are key or important. The high percentage rate of Black respondents raising this construct to the level of a key construct is the reason why this construct was raised to the level of a key construct across all 40 respondents. Furthermore, there was a 58% preference for the construct, PD focused on teacher flexibility, teacher reflection, equity, and antiracism; and a 42% preference for the construct pole, teaching fragmented or standardized/more Eurocentric base,

being implicitly biased. This could be attributed to Black respondents' beliefs that "professional and skills development of staff" was missing significant aspects needed in their teaching experiences.

Black respondents reported the following statements during their interviews:

"For me the focus in on meeting them [students] where they are at so they can succeed on their level and it not be standardized. We [Teachers] need training in learning how to be comfortable with Black students." -B7

"I work with so many White teachers that just do not get it. They do not like our [Black] students, and I always wonder why they work with them. Our PDs [Professional Developments] are fluff and focus on relationships, but you cannot have a relationship with people you do not like. Teachers need better training."-B3

"We [Teachers] need meaningful, thoughtful, and planned Professional Development, and we need to talk about race, not just test." -B1

The construct "professional and skills development of staff" was very significant among Black respondents. Not only was it significant, Black respondents repeatedly stressed that professional development needed to focus on teacher flexibility, teacher reflection practices, equity, and race or antiracism training. During interviews, Black respondents alluded to their White colleagues and Administrators as not having the skills and training needed to work with Black students. They also suggested that their White colleagues did not understand their privilege and did not acknowledge their whiteness and how their whiteness affected Black student learning. Lynch (2018) posited, "Whiteness adds a tangible concept that teachers can grasp, but it requires exposure to the concept over time to see more clearly when classroom practices are not equitable for all students" (p. 19). The findings of this study indicated that

Black in-service teachers believe and agree, more than White in-service teachers do, with the above scholars in that professional development is a key construct to creating equitable classrooms where learning takes place. In this study's sample, this discrepancy may suggest that life experiences actively impact teacher focus. To promote equity, this novel finding will need to be addressed.

However, White respondents have shown through this study that effective professional development can increase teacher's capacity and knowledge. As a current educator, my experience with professional development supports this finding, in that the central focus of professional developments that I have participated in over the last five years have included increasing achievement through establishing better relationships with students through caring and trust. The findings of my study indicated that White respondents have begun to embrace this message, while Black respondents focused on expanding their beliefs through professional development and administrative support.

Presently, in-service teachers receive required professional development, and the participants of this study widely agreed that professional development training that included gaining skills and evaluating values was more beneficial than professional development that focused on testing and improving state report cards. While there is an explicit effort in American education to require professional development on a broad list of topics, it has not been my experience as an educator in Ohio to receive training in sharing my lived experiences with students as a primary means to birthing connection, nor has it been my experience that race, equity, teacher reflection, and teacher flexibility have been emphasized elements in our professional practice. Most commonly, professional development training modules have preached utilizing in-class activities or coordinating themes across subjects and increasing student achievement through

standardization. Developing meaningful relationships with students through a personal approach has also been emphasized, but under the auspice of caring and building trust within a classroom setting.

My findings suggest that increasing and improving skills as in-service teachers requires the continuous support of school district administrators. As a key construct, both Black and White respondents believed that “impacts of administrative responsiveness and support” was important to Black student learning. This finding suggests that respondents believed that without the foundational support of administrators, their efforts to increase Black student learning is restricted. Administrative support is also needed to facilitate collaborative efforts among in-service teachers in the sharing of beliefs about Black student learning. The next section discusses respondents' results of the “impact of administrative responsiveness and supports” as a key construct.

***Construct “Impacts of Administrative Responsiveness and Supports”***

This study found that among Black and White respondents, “impacts of administration responsiveness and support” came out as a key construct when analyzed within the subsamples. The construct is defined as an administrator's ability to allow teacher autonomy and flexibility, supportive of antiracist work, and support of high expectations for learning. The construct pole is defined as administration having rigid systems of academic learning and discipline, disregarding antiracist work, and having low expectations for learning. Seventy percent of Black respondents and 35% of White respondents felt that this is a key construct. Black respondents' variability is 4.2% higher than White respondents, which indicates that Black respondents rated this key construct 4.2% more than White respondents when rating their teaching experiences. Black

respondents preferred the construct 64% over the construct pole of 36%, whereas White respondents preferred the construct 96% over the construct pole of 4%.

Of the 35%, White respondents stressed the need for administrators' support around building and classroom structure, and 70% Black respondents reported the need for supportive administration in efforts to reduce racism, inequality, and bad student behavior outcomes. An example of reported statements are as follows:

"First, they [administrators] need to hire more Black teachers. I am always one of a few, and we are exhausted fighting for equity for our Black students. Administrators just need to support us more." -B11

"I had a student who just needed outside support for what was happening in their home, and all my boss [Administrator] cared about was our test scores. I wish we had more support." -B6

"We have rules for a reason. They [Administrators] need to follow through on consequences for behavior. It gives mixed signals to students when we are not on the same page." -B8

"This is sort of overall for 15 years. I have been in both settings with strong Administration and not. And it can make or break a whole environment, but it also can let you know that no matter how limited your resources are, there is definite ways to be successful in your classroom. If you have strong Administration leading you." -W30



“Administration sets the tone, in that, it is not just a teacher expectation to be antiracist. So, if administrators put an emphasis on race and equity, they can improve student learning quite a bit.”-B14

When Black respondents rated their teaching experiences against this construct, often, there were several ratings that favored the construct pole. Based on the reported interviews, Black teachers believed that the teaching experiences they reported lacked administration support. Thus, their preference rating was lower than White respondents. This supports B. L. Young et al. (2010), who indicated that school administrators were unprepared to lead in diverse schools and implement a policy that would respond to diversity issues. They also could not even articulate meaningful discourses around diversity. In a qualitative study by Jenkin and Alfred (2017), the examination of what motivates White educators to be culturally responsive and how educators can be transformed into culturally responsive teachers were explored with White professors. Jenkin and Alfred (2017) found that the lack of administrative support to embrace culturally responsive teaching was a hindrance to the implementation of cultural practices. Khalifa et al. (2016) discussed Culturally Responsive School Leadership and how school administrators needed to be informed and trained on how to create and maintain a school culture that is inclusive of cultural practices. However, this study confirms, as reported by in-service teachers, that administrators set the foundation to embrace any or all constructs identified for the success of Black student learning.

My study indicated that administrative support is central in in-service teachers transforming and embracing cultural pedagogy and improving Black student learning. Gay (2010) made the point that culturally responsive teaching is important, but she also argued the importance of reforming and transforming all aspects of education. She suggested the

administration must be culturally responsive as part of the transformation process. This is significant in this study because the identified five shared key constructs promote in-service teachers' values and skills that require administrators' support for practices to be implemented and sustained over time. Due to power hierarchies across school districts, administrators' buy-in and support are absolutely required to shift the focus of the teaching approach. Khalifa et al. (2016) posited “culturally responsive leaders develop and support the school staff and promote a climate that makes the whole school welcoming, inclusive, and accepting of minoritized students” (p. 1276). Administrators are needed to embrace culturally responsive pedagogy and teaching in classrooms that serve Black students. Khalifa et al. (2016) acknowledged that research around culturally responsive leaders is “deeply undertheorized and underresearched” (p. 1297). Thus, this research adds to the discussion of the need to provide skills training to school administrators that include cultural pedagogy. Therefore, as a key construct explicitly identified by respondents, administrator support is not only necessary but serves as the foundation toward a path of Black student learning.

In answering my research objective that states: “*Identify the constructs consistently associated with reported teaching experiences,*” the aforementioned key constructs indicate the key constructs that are consistently associated with reported teaching experiences. Each of the shared five key constructs was found in multiple analyses as being important to Black student learning. This is significant in that out of the 11 key constructs found in this study; five were the most salient for respondents.

As indicated in Figure 4.6, four shared key constructs favored the construct over the construct pole. However, “caring” and “trust” were found to have the highest preference with the construct among respondents. “Inclusion of lived experiences” had a moderate preference, and

“professional and skills development of staff” had the lowest preference. This was based on preference data that indicated the percentage of the pole preference among respondents. This indicates that although these constructs were shared, there was a differential preference among them. Ultimately, the level of the key construct of importance involved the personal beliefs of each respondent within their teaching experiences. This points to the need to increase the agreement of shared key constructs for better alignment to Black student learning in all teaching experiences.

The preference data highlights one major difference among shared key constructs. However, the other six key constructs found in the subsample data were different in that they were individually important to Black or White respondents. The next section describes key constructs that were identified by only Black in-service teachers and only White teachers and how they relate to existing literature.

### **Key Constructs Individually Important to Black In-service Teachers**

The current study indicates a pattern of responses that identified different constructs among Black and White Respondents that were not shared in any way. This section answers the second part of research question two that addresses differences among in-service teachers. When respondents were analyzed in subsamples, the data tell a different story that highlights major differences between Black and White respondents. The next section discusses these important differences between respondents, starting with Black respondents.

#### ***Black Respondent Key Construct “Effects of Teacher Expectations on Student Responsiveness”***

Only Black respondents believed that “effects of teacher expectations on student responsiveness” was a key construct. The construct is defined as a student's response to teacher expectations. The construct pole is defined as teachers not having the ability to influence student

responses. Seventy-five percent of Black respondents believed that this construct was important. The variability rate across teaching experiences was 4% above the average normal variability. The construct, student response to teacher expectations, was preferred 67% of the time; and the construct pole was preferred 33% of the time. This was the second-highest construct elicited by Black respondents. Black respondents reported the following personal constructs and construct poles:

- A student engaging in content because of Teacher/student relationship/ Lack of engagement because of teacher/student relationships
- Mutual Teacher/student excitement to be in school/ Lack of mutual excitement to be in school
- Teacher and student mutual hard work/ Lack of teacher and student mutual hard work

This key construct supports research by Ladson-Billings (2009) that suggested in-service teachers must play the role of a conductor and a coach. As mentioned in Chapter II, conductors believe students are capable of excellence and assume responsibility for ensuring excellence. Coaches believe students are capable of excellence and share responsibility with parents, community, and students. This study indicated that Black respondents believed they had a responsibility to ensure Black student learning and that teacher actions could advance or hinder the learning of Black students. This confirms the teacher typology that Ladson-Billings suggest, as reported by respondents during interviews. For example, Black respondents reported the following:

“Black students need to be reminded that they are brilliant and can learn. That is my job to do in the classroom.”-B12

“I have to work as hard as my students. It is my responsibility to make sure they learn.”-B10

“My actions directly reflect student responsiveness to learning. It takes a village to help and support students, but I have them most of the day, so it is more my responsibility.”-B8

Black respondents felt a responsibility to set a high standard for students and for themselves.

This key construct was identified as the second most reported key construct for Black respondents within the subsample data.

***Black Respondent Key Construct “Parental Responsibility and Active Involvement”***

Black respondents have one last key construct that they solely identified. The construct “parental responsibility and active involvement” was mentioned by 30% of Black respondents and favored the construct 98% over the construct pole. It was the least mentioned key construct among Black respondents; however, it was raised as a key construct because it met the threshold for unique mentions and average normal variability. Black respondents reported that Black students learn when parents are responsible and active in their learning. This also confirms culturally relevant pedagogy that suggests that parents should be involved in a student’s education.

**Summary**

The individual key constructs identified solely by Black respondents, acknowledge the responsibility of teachers and parents to impact Black student learning positively. Irvine (1990) argued that Black students need positive teacher/student relationships to achieve academic success and asserts that those relationships mirror parent/child relationships. For Black students, this notion is advantageous in increasing learning because Black students rely on those connections for positive academic outcomes. I surmise that Black respondents understand this importance and therefore were able to identify the above constructs as important to Black student

learning. The next section discusses key constructs identified only by White respondents as important.

### **Key Constructs Important to White In-service Teachers**

White respondents identified four key constructs that were different from the Black respondents that they believed also increase Black student learning. Those key constructs are detailed in the following sections.

#### ***White Respondent Key Construct “Cultural Knowledge and Competence in Teaching Diverse Students”***

As mentioned in Chapter II, Multicultural Education (Banks, 1976), Culturally Relevant Pedagogy and Teaching (Gay, 2012; Ladson-Billings, 1995a), and Engaged Pedagogy (hooks, 1994) all suggest that socio-political inclusion, relationships, caring, and the inclusion of culture are necessary factors when teaching Black students.

The construct “cultural knowledge and competence in teaching diverse students” is not a key construct across all 40 respondents. However, White teachers believe “cultural knowledge and competence in teaching diverse students” is a key or important construct. The construct was mentioned by 35% of White teachers and showed 18.7% of variability across teaching experiences, meeting the qualification of a key construct. It was preferred 96% over the construct pole.

In comparison, Black teachers did not meet the qualification of a key construct for this construct because only 15% met the unique frequency threshold. However, those Black teachers had an 18.4% variability rate, which suggests that they incorporated cultural knowledge and competence across their teaching experiences. Black and White teachers reported the following:

“Teacher need to use PDs [Professional Developments] to understand stereotypes,”-W40

“White teacher comfortability is all about understanding culture,”-W30

“White teacher cultural immersion is very important for Black students, and we need more training around that.” -W39

“Knowing the culture of the building and families you serve is important.”-B20

“Teachers understanding how to interact with Black students.”-B16

This finding is consistent with the existing literature. (Banks, 2001a; Gay, 2014; Ladson-Billings, 2009). It ascertained that cultural knowledge and competence in teaching diverse students must be prioritized if Black students are to learn. This was true among both Black and White teacher responses, although only White respondents raised this construct to the level of a key construct.

Research by Ladson-Billings (2009) posited that cultural relevance includes several aspects of student and school culture and that “culturally relevant teaching uses student culture in order to maintain it and to transcend the negative effects of the dominant culture” (p. 19). Thus, “culturally relevant teaching empowers students intellectually, socially, emotionally and politically” (Ladson-Billings, 2009, p. 20). In general, my current research establishes that existing literature that posits “culture” as an important aspect of teaching and learning is slightly significant with today’s in-service teachers.

### ***White Respondent Key Construct “Immediate and Extended Family Relationships”***

Only White respondents believed “immediate and extended family relationships” to be a key construct. Fifty percent of White respondents felt this construct was important. The variability rate was high at 27.3, a 13% difference of the needed average normal variability of 14.2. Additionally, of the 50% White respondents, there was a 91% preference toward the construct, teachers’ ability to have meaningful ongoing relationships with a student’s family; and 9% toward the construct pole, not being connected and available to the family with a student’s

family. This finding suggests that over half of White respondents have a strong belief that “immediate and extended family relationships” were important to Black student learning. This was evident in White respondents’ reporting during the interview process. The following remarks reflect this:

“I had an aha moment once I figured out that knowing my students extended family and support system helped me teach them [students] and getting them to learn.” -W22

“Families help with students finding motivation from within to come to school. They [Families] are important to the learning process.”-W30

“When I have family support, it is awesome, because sometimes I have students who have siblings and cousins that come through my class. It makes it easier for me to teach students.”-W32

This key construct is an interesting finding in that it asserts that Black student learning is influenced by relationships that in-service teachers have with extended family members. This is significant because it suggests that White in-service teachers recognize that going beyond the nuclear family to engage with extended family members is important to Black student learning. Being a Black educator myself, I found the lack of Black respondent response on this topic surprising. However, this emphasizes that studies similar to this are truly required to promote unbiased understanding, free of assumptions.

The construct “immediate and extended family members” is highlighted because it extends beyond existing literature and adds the factor of extended family. White respondents believed that this construct made a big difference in having a positive relationship with their students. One respondent explained how their assumption that their students had present, active and involved parents really became a hindrance to students’ learning. It was not until the



respondent reached out to extended family members that they made meaningful gains in having a relationship with their student. Another respondent discussed how having a relationship with her student's aunts and cousins helped facilitate better communication and relationship with her students. This is just a small example of how in-service White teachers felt that the construct of “immediate and extended family relationships” enabled Black student learning.

***White Respondent Key Constructs “Academic Engagement” and “Teacher High Academic Expectations”***

White respondents had two additional key constructs that were not significant for Black in-service teachers that include: “academic engagement” and “teacher high academic expectations.” Both constructs were favored 99% over their construct pole. They averaged 35% of the respondents’ unique frequency. As mentioned in Chapter IV, these two constructs focus solely on academic achievement without any regard to the students’ lived experiences. The identified key constructs, “academic engagement” and “teacher high academic expectations,” aligns with compulsory education that is purely academic-focused. White respondents elicited personal constructs and construct poles such as:

- Structure and Stability/ Freedom to choose.
- Students being intrinsically motivated/ Students being extrinsically motivated.
- Students staying focused on end goal/ Students being overwhelmed and quitting.

This finding aligns with scholars’ beliefs that compulsory education is justifiable to White in-service teachers without pausing to consider student diversity or lived experiences (Sleeter, 2012). The exclusion of cultural practices and lived experiences from the aforementioned key constructs that focus on academic achievement supports the notion for professional and skills development of staff to be expanded to include cultural practices, as mentioned by Black respondents. This illuminates why professional development around cultural

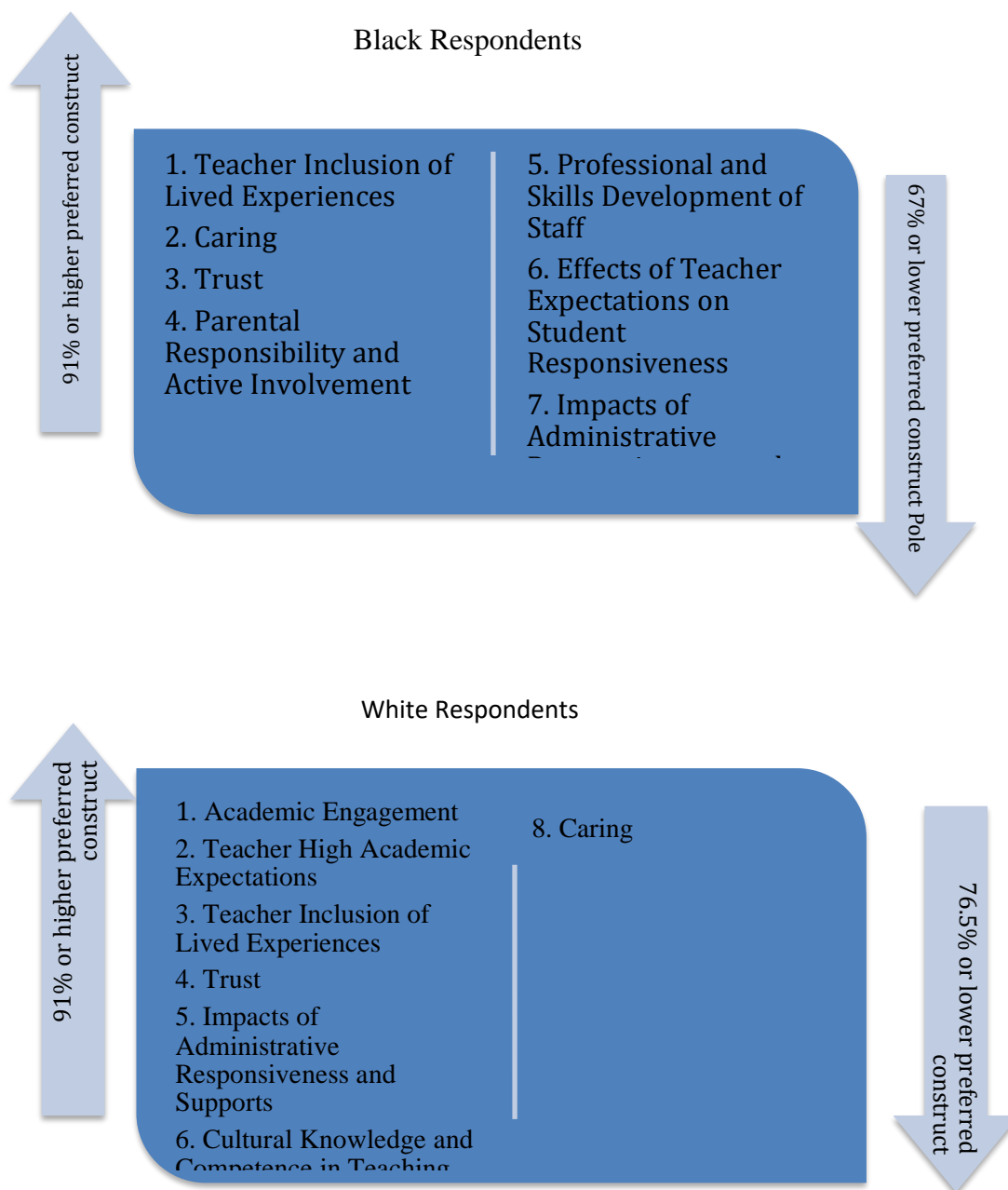
practices is needed with support from administrators in districts that serve Black students. Only through professional development training that focuses on cultural practices and student lived experiences underpinned with administrator support can the whole child be truly considered in the classroom. The current approach to both teacher training and student assessment neglects these factors, contributing to the exact inequities that need to be addressed.

### **Summary**

In summary, all 11 key constructs, which were elicited not just by the entire group, but by Black and White respondents separately, have potential implications for k-12 education and Black student learning. Figure 5.3 illustrates the bipolar representation of the key constructs and their association with Black student learning. It shows that Black respondents had high preferences for four of the seven key constructs and a lower preference with three of their key constructs. Comparatively, White respondents had high preference with six of their seven constructs.

**Figure 5.3**

*Respondents' Key Constructs and Their Preferred Pole Percentage*



In general, Figure 5.2 indicates that Black respondents had more of an equal preference for constructs and construct poles than White respondents. This suggests that the teaching experiences reported by Black respondents were varied and inclusive of both the construct and construct pole. White respondents preferred their constructs over the construct pole most of the time, indicating a stronger preference for most of their key constructs during their teaching experiences. This finding implies White respondents showed little variance in their identified beliefs and teaching experiences, indicating a potentially biased reporting as they identified their personal preference of key constructs.

### **Impact of Construct Preferences Among In-service Teachers**

One way of making sense of my findings is to suggest that when in-service teachers' beliefs are aligned, it allows for collaboration and enables Black students to learn. When in-service teachers prefer constructs at a high percentage rate and believe they are important for Black student learning, it may be difficult to change their perceptions. In aggregating the preference pole data, it could be seen that White respondents preferred their constructs over their construct poles. For example, White respondents rated their teaching experiences against their beliefs with favorable ratings despite clear differences among their teaching experiences. It was as if they felt that a preference for the construct pole symbolized a negative belief that would be looked at poorly by the researcher or the general public.

### **Implications of In-service Teachers Beliefs About Black Student Learning**

Table 5.1 connects each key construct with the findings of this study and to existing literature. The table indicates if key constructs has been categorized as a value, skill, or foundation. Each key construct also specifies which respondents identified them as essential to

Black student learning. Distinguishing between respondents is important in this study because it offers a perspective of what different ethnic groups believe about Black student learning.

**Table 5.1***Key Constructs Confirmed in Existing Literature*

	<b>Key Construct</b>	<b>Value/Skill/ Foundation</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Confirmed in Existing K-12 Literature</b>
1	Caring	Value	Black and White Respondents agree on Importance	Gay, 2010
2	Trust	Value	Black and White Respondents agree on importance	Gay, 2000; Ladson-Billings, 1994; Warren 2018
3	Teacher inclusion of lived experiences	Value	Black and White Respondents agree on importance	hooks, 1994
4	Professional and skills development of staff	Skill	Black and White Respondents agree on importance	Ladson-Billings, 2011; Sahlberg, 2013; Skrla et al., 2004
5	Impacts of administrative responsiveness and supports	Foundation	Black and White Respondents agree on importance	Gay, 2010; Jenkin and Alfred, 2017; Khalifa, 2011

	<b>Key Construct</b>	<b>Value/Skill/ Foundation</b>	<b>Findings</b>	<b>Confirmed in Existing K-12 Literature</b>
6	Effects of teacher expectations on student responsiveness	Skill	Black Respondents agree on importance	Ladson-Billings, 2018
7	Parental responsibility and active involvement	Value	Black Respondents agree on importance	Ladson-Billings, 1994; Ishimaru, 2013
8	Academic engagement	Skill	White Respondents agree on importance	Gay, 2010; Khalifa, 2011
9	Teacher's high academic expectations	Value	White Respondents agree on importance	Ladson-Billings, 2011
10	Cultural knowledge and competence in teaching diverse students	Skill	35% of White Respondents agree on importance	Gay, Ladson-Billings, 1994
11	Immediate and Extended Family Relationships	Value	White Respondents agree on importance	Boykin, 1983

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Table 5.1 indicates that all 11 key constructs are present in the existing literature that focuses on cultural relevance and equity. However, this study confirms these beliefs by garnering responses from the self-reported lived experiences of in-service teachers. Furthermore, this study points to the notion that in-service teachers believe that culture is just a small factor of importance to increase Black student learning. In fact, respondents in this study identified five constructs that were more important than culture. In the discussion section, I will argue the possible implications of this study's findings and recommendations for further research.

## **Discussion**

Much of the existing literature about what is important in Black students' learning is positioned in preservice education, as mentioned in Chapter II. This study is unique in that it included 40 in-service teachers, teachers who are currently teaching, all of whom had at least five years of experience. All 40 respondents reported that they had little to no preservice education that focused solely on culture, race, equity, or strategies to enhance Black students' ability to learn.

About 80% of respondents reported having professional developments throughout their career that focused solely on building positive relationships with students. However, Black respondents reported that they felt professional developments focused on relationships were "a waste of time because they had relationships with their kids" (B15). Twenty percent reported having professional development that focused on culture, equity, and race. Thus, the significance of this study strengthens recommendations for schools to have meaningful and effective professional development that moves beyond the curriculum, state testing, and relationship building to include teacher flexibility, equity, and antiracism. Key constructs are identified in this



study that can serve as a focus within professional development training for in-service teachers to improve their ability to increase Black student learning.

In this study, there are some indications based on the quantitative and qualitative data that White and Black teachers have a set of shared key constructs that represent values and skills that they believe help Black students learn. The improvement of respondents' teaching effectiveness in culturally diverse settings is dependent upon skills that are gained and supported, and values that are held. This study lends novel insights to the education field by illuminating patterns of beliefs that are held by in-service teachers as critical to Black student learning. The existence of a set of shared beliefs allows for collaboration with teachers and administrators to help increase Black student learning using the same baseline of key constructs. The key constructs "caring," "trust," and "teacher inclusion of lived experiences" are what I interpret to be these values.

When analyzing subsample data, it is important to note that "caring," "trust," and "teacher inclusion of lived experiences" were mainly listed by White respondents. About 63% of White respondents believed that the above constructs were most important in enabling Black students to learn. In contrast, the same three constructs only comprised 30% of Black respondent's beliefs that these constructs were important. This is significant because it suggests that over half of White respondents believe that Black student learning is dependent upon the above three constructs, making these constructs most important to White respondents. In contrast, about 80% of Black respondents identified "professional, and skills development of staff" and "effects of teacher expectations on student responsiveness" were most important in enabling Black students to learn. Black respondents' focus was on what I interpret as skills. However, both Black and White respondents felt that without "impacts of administrative

responsiveness and supports,” their beliefs would not be embraced or infused into the culture of the school. I interpret this as the foundation needed in order for every other construct or in-service teacher’s belief to become valuable in public school districts serving Black students. The above findings provide implications for the professional development of k-12 in-service teachers.

### ***Implications for Professional Development***

The results of this study are vital to developing effective professional development within school districts. Individual key constructs can inform professional development training by incorporating the respondents’ individual key constructs to arrive at common beliefs on what helps Black students learn. In this instance, professional development can be used to raise the importance of the above shared key constructs for Black respondents that can yield positive results during classroom instruction. Another example, “effects of teacher expectations on student responsiveness,” is a key construct identified by Black respondents. However, this construct could be introduced during a professional development training where in-service teachers that may not recognize this as important to Black student learning can begin to see the benefit of this construct in helping Black students learn. In these ways, in-service teachers could begin to take the necessary steps to incorporate this belief in their classrooms as they teach Black students.

### ***Connecting Shared Key Constructs with Collaboration Efforts***

This type of professional development and collaboration must be supported by administrators in order to be effective. As a key construct, respondents identified “impacts of administrative responsiveness and supports” as important and needed to enable Black student learning. Administrators’ influence over school culture and professional development focus are

crucial in establishing environments that advance Black student learning. Both Black and White respondents identified administrators as having influence over the culture, processes, and procedures within school buildings. An established collaborative approach by in-service teachers and administrators to work collectively in reducing racism, and increasing teacher's flexibility, reflections, and equitable education only serves to improve learning for Black students.

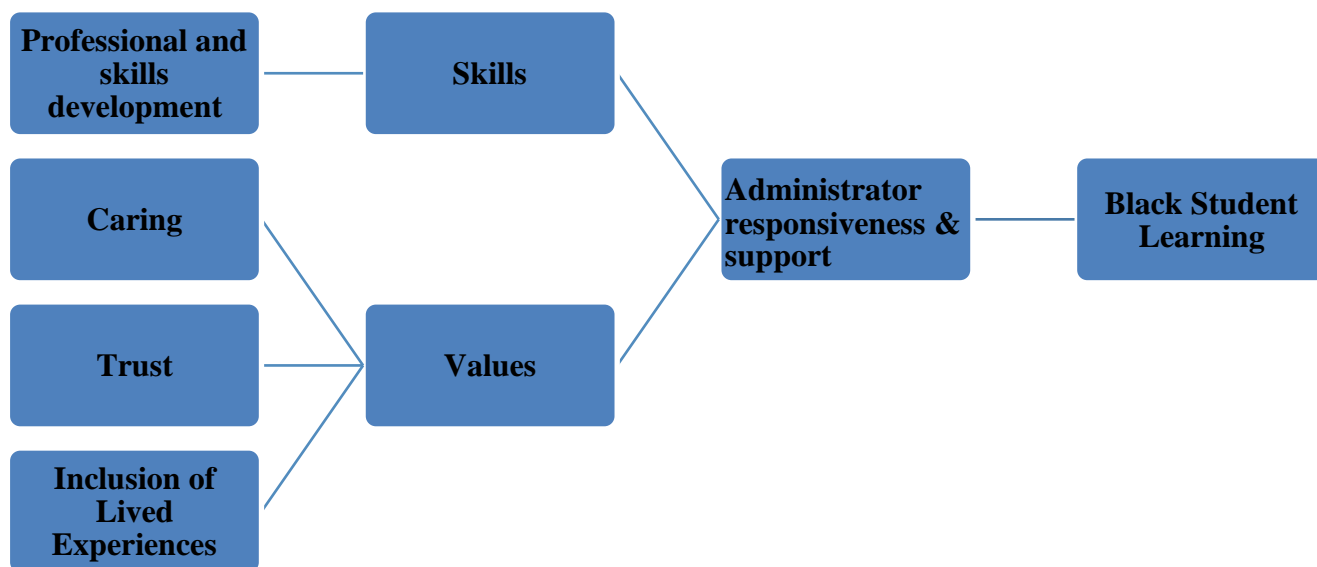
As a key construct, "professional and skills development" serves as an avenue to obtain needed skills that can be used in classroom settings. As stated in Chapter II, existing research has stressed the need for professional development training for in-service teachers. Professional development that is effective and relevant to the lived experiences of students leads to a more informed teacher. Effective professional development also enable in-service teachers to enhance skills, tools, and strategies that address behavior that would typically send a Black student out of the classroom. Effective professional development helps teachers become more in tune with the student resulting in the student becoming more academically secure. This leads to teachers having the language to speak to parents in a manner that is well received, which will empower parents to find ways to support their children in the school environment. So, when looking at effective professional development, school districts must look at how its use can create conditions that have the potential to change the student, the community, and the teacher.

I am suggesting that when administrators support this type of effective professional development so that more than one teacher is trained and allow the trained teachers to work together to change, collaborative teaching occurs (Khalifa et al., 2016). For example, if there is a cluster of teachers teaching 5<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> grade or 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup> working individually, but also collectively sharing ideas and strategies, this leads to a real collaboration. With administrative support, the climate in each individual school building can lead to positive change, and as a

result, Black students will learn. This is affirmed by Khalifa et al. (2016) when discussing how to have culturally responsive school leadership. Khalifa et al. (2016) posited “principals have also served as transformational leaders, wherein they have successfully promoted environments with strong relationships of trust, vision, goals, and Culturally Responsive School Leadership a sense of community” (p. 1278).

The key construct “professional and skills development” refers to skills gained through training and the commitment of both in-service teachers and administrators. Understanding and adapting to cultural responsiveness requires intentional training and reflection. “Caring,” “trust,” and the “inclusion of lived experiences” are values that in-service teachers must truly believe are important to enabling Black students to learn. Combined constructs as values and skills could lead to culturally collaborative teaching as long as these constructs are shared and yield results in teacher effectiveness when teaching diverse populations.

Based on the findings in this study, the most important key constructs that answer my research objective, “Identify the constructs consistently associated with each teaching experience” could fall under two categories: individual teachable skills and values underpinned by administrative support. As shared key constructs, these provides a path toward culturally collaborative teaching. Figure 5. 4 illustrates these two categories of significant constructs needed for culturally collaborative teaching. This illustrative model highlights two potential routes of intervention to improve teacher performance; skill development and value emphasis and construction. That is, the findings of the current study suggest that student performance through teacher effectiveness may likely be most greatly increased when teachers are both taught shared specific skills and encouraged to emphasize shared positive, personal values and underpinned by administrators’ responsiveness and support.

**Figure 5.4***A Path toward Culturally Collaborative Teaching*

Culturally Collaborative teaching is a framework in which teachers, regardless of race and cultural background, integrate and develop a shared set of skills and values with administrator support and understanding of cultural practices. My research indicates that together, these components serve as the foundation for positively impacting academic learning for Black students.

In summary, this study has significant findings that ultimately lead to the need for teachers and administrators to collaborate. Whereas cultural relevance is a major component for Black student learning, this study finds other components driven by a teacher's beliefs that are also important. Those components I derive from respondents' most salient and consistent key constructs. Based on these my study offers the foundations of a new path to Black student

learning that calls on teachers and administrators to collaborate and share their beliefs and skills that are effective when teaching Black students.

### ***Theoretical Contribution***

The findings in this study indicate a need to extend cultural theories to include shared beliefs identified by in-service teachers that are central to Black student learning. Currently, culturally pedagogical theories uses racialized discourses and ethnic epistemologies that frame cultural theories within the bounds of race and ethnicity. Critical race theorist challenges the dominant world view and logic that asserts ethnicity and culture are not important factors in determining academic growth and achievement (Ladson-Billings, 2000). However, this study contributes by not only confirming the importance of culture and race, the study also identifies other factors that are central by using a constructive alternativism epistemology. Whereas existing studies rely on the belief that race is a socially constructed paradigm that impacts Black students, this study relies on in-service teachers to identify the beliefs that were most important to them when teaching Black students in public k-12 educational settings.

As a result, this study expands the notion that race is the most important factor contributing to Black student learning and offers a set of skills and values, when shared by in-service teachers, that impact Black student learning as well. My research questions provide the underlying foundation to many research questions that ask why are Black students lacking in academic growth and success. This study asks what contributes to the academic growth and success of Black students in k-12 public education. Because I use RepGrid, this study also provides insight into the relative importance in-service teacher's beliefs or constructs. Other theories do not provide this information when studying in-service teachers.

### ***Practical Contribution***

As an evidence informed framework, Culturally Collaborative Teaching (CCT) includes constructs that represent a shared foundation with a set of values and skills which, when embraced by all teachers and supported by administrators, create a new lens to professional practice that can possibly result in higher levels of academic learning for Black students. The improvement of respondents' teaching effectiveness in culturally diverse settings is dependent upon skills that are gained and supported, and values that are held. Thus, the practical contributions of this study include identifying thinking patterns of in-service teachers that test explain, and anticipate teaching experiences in urban k-12 educational settings. In-service teachers will constantly update their beliefs as they prove useful or less useful in interpreting teaching experiences (Kelly, 1955). Therefore, a sharing of beliefs about Black student learning could result in collaborative efforts that impact Black students in urban k-12 educational settings. This sharing of beliefs and collaborative effort leads to a new understanding of how in-service teachers think about Black student learning. It provides an insight in how their patterns of thought impact Black students during classroom instruction. And it offers a methodology that clearly identifies those patterns that are most useful when working with Black students.

This study offers a framework that sets the foundation that ultimately leads to the behavior and actions of in-service teachers; who choose to use cultural pedagogical practices and those who do not while working with Black students.

### **Future Research**

This study left several questions unanswered that could be beneficial in future research. For example: Would Black students agree with these constructs and would in-service teachers of other ethnicities identify the same or different constructs? Those questions could help develop more shared key constructs that could prove beneficial for in-service teachers. Also, further

research would include an exploration of the extent to which these constructs do, indeed, translate into sustainable actions and behaviors. Future research could also address the extent to which key constructs translate to equitable education experiences for Black students.

### **Limitations of This Study**

This study was limited by the race of the respondents interviewed. Although I was interested in comparing Black and White teachers, I am also aware that White females make up 80% of the teaching population across America. I did limit the use of other ethnicities; thus, there is no data pertaining to their beliefs about what enables Black students to learn.

Another limitation was the interpretations of the respondents. It led to validity and reliability questions. Goffin (2003) posited that “Teachers may not properly rate the factors due to their personal influence” (p. 203). This happened among several respondents where they rated their teaching experiences the same rating against all constructs. This study was also limited to one state.

### **Conclusion**

Although this study aligns with previous work, what I have discovered is that Black and White in-service teachers have beliefs that are similar and different. Each belief in its own way contributes to Black student learning. Neither Black nor White teachers hold the entire picture of what enables Black students to learn. Thus, the need for collaboration arises. Although culturally responsive pedagogy offers empirical and theoretical conventions for becoming an effective teacher of diverse students, it does not provide a lens of in-service teachers working together with the same beliefs about Black student learning. The collaboration of in-service teachers allows for a continuous effort to begin implementing strategies to increase equitable education in America. Investing in professional development and strong leadership as a form of intentional



collaboration that allows us to share values and skills and formulating shared beliefs is a start. I believe that urban school districts can also achieve equity by incorporating common key constructs in professional developments and allowing in-service teachers to reflect and discover new beliefs that have an impact on Black student learning. Warren (2018) posited that raising the capacity of a teacher's ability to implement empathy; teachers would increase their capacity to respond flexibly to diverse students' moment-by-moment. Increasing teacher's capacity and acknowledging that race matters must go beyond standard-based education and create more effective pathways to the learning of Black students. This study points to the importance of administrative support underpinning collaborative efforts among in-service teachers that lead to transforming classrooms into equitable spaces for Black students.

For Black students, who bring their culture and background to the classroom, their ability to engage in learning is difficult. Gay (2000) posited pedagogical paradigms and techniques that may be effective but not culturally situated for marginalized, underachieving ethnic groups are not included in discussions centered on academic achievement. As a result, standard-based education caters to a specific type of student, making it harder to create educational equity for all students who attend urban school districts. This research aims to position Black students to achieve all they are capable of and experience equitable education in their classrooms with all the in-service teachers they encounter. Thus, the need for culturally collaborative teaching.

### **Closing Reflections**

As a current educator and Mother of a school aged Black son, this research has been of upmost importance to me. As my son matriculates through k-12 education, it is important that his experiences are positive, encouraging, and accepting of his culture and lived experience. Understanding that majority of his teachers will be White and female, I really wanted to know

what thought patterns, beliefs, and values they held about teaching Black students. Learning theoretical models and pedagogy isn't always useful in real time while working with k-12 students, thus I believed that teachers' values and beliefs must be the driving force and the foundation during their teaching experiences. This research confirmed my belief and opened up new possibilities for in-service teachers to rethink how they approach Black student learning.

This research has also revealed that change is constant and beliefs change with experiences. Each experience is unique and personal to the individual. It is that uniqueness that offers new perspectives and ideas that bring forth transformational change. I began with an assumption that Black and White teachers had completely different beliefs on what was needed to increase Black student learning. But what I found is that their similarities outweighed their differences and with adequate support, training, and collaboration Black and White teachers can contribute equally to the success of Black student learning. The findings in this study revealed what teachers felt was most important when teaching Black students. Although, other constructs emerged, it was the shared constructs that truly impacted my research.

This study confirmed the importance of administrators and collaboration. Teaching is an autonomous profession and often times teachers' scoff at the idea of working with colleagues. Through this research, I realized that the gift of collaboration has the possibility to bring about meaningful and positive change for Black students.

The roadmap provide through this research has led me to believe that transformational leadership is possible and can occur within a major system. Thinking patterns of human beings are impactful and important to learning environment. The results of my study remind me of existing literature that focuses on students having a growth mindset, defined as, when students

understand that their abilities can be developed (Dweck, 2014). I think that the same should apply for teachers.

Administrators should support teachers to grow and develop in areas such as race, culture, bias knowing that teacher's beliefs and abilities can change and develop overtime. What was apparent is that the focus for Black student learning should be around values and skills, not academics. This affirms my own personal educational philosophy and how I approach instructing my college students.

In summary, research is about discovery and what I discovered through this process and my study, is that it truly takes a village and collaboration to transform systems that are not inclusive of the lived experiences of those they serve.

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## Appendix

## Appendix A: Marketing for Research Study



### K-12 Teachers needed for my research study.

#### Participation Information for Cultural Ways of Learning Study.

The purpose of this study is to understand what teachers in grades k-12 believe about teacher effectiveness and teaching/learning experiences in urban schools. The purpose is driven by the long-term goal of enhancing the educational experience of Black students in public k-12 education.

This study will conduct structured interviews that should take no longer than 60 minutes. For your convenience, the interviews can take place before, during, or after school hours.

To maintain confidentiality all information will be de-identified, so that it cannot be connected back to you. Your real name will be replaced with a pseudonym in the write-up of this project. The location of the school will be referred to as an urban school in the Midwest. I will be the only person with access to the list connecting your name to the pseudonym and school. This list, along with any tape recordings will be kept in a secure, locked location that only I will have access to either with a key or a secure password.

#### RESEARCH STUDY!

#### CULTURAL WAYS OF TEACHING AND LEARNING!

“EDUCATION IS FOR IMPROVING THE LIVES OF OTHERS AND FOR LEAVING YOUR COMMUNITY AND WORLD BETTER THAN YOU FOUND IT!”

~MARIAN WRIGHT EDELMAN

#### QUESTIONS?

#### PLEASE CONTACT:

J. LOVE BENTON,  
DOCTORAL CANDIDATE  
Jbenton1@antioch.edu

**Appendix B: Repertory Grid Protocol - Inservice Teachers**  
**(Understanding teaching experiences in urban school settings)**

To Whom It May Concern:

Thank you very much for agreeing to be interviewed about your teaching experiences in urban school settings, a school that has over students who are black, economically disadvantaged, and lives in the State of Ohio.

My name is J. Love Benton. I am a Doctoral Candidate at Antioch University, Leadership, and Change Program. The purpose of this research is to understand what inservice teachers deem to be important while teaching and learning in an urban school setting and to also discover the shared understanding of teacher effectiveness in urban school settings.

In a face-to-face interview, I would like to ask you about several teaching experiences that you believed were meaningful and important to you in any way, positive or negative. The objective is to get your personal views about six teaching experiences you have had in urban school settings. During the interview, I will ask you to compare and contrast each teaching experience. This will help to identify what characteristics of teaching experiences are important to you.

Before the interview, **Please think of six teaching experiences that left a lasting impression on you in a classroom setting while working with Black students.** Please write down either the name or some way of identifying each of the six teaching experiences that you have chosen. I do not need you to provide full details of these teaching experiences so that I can identify them, just enough details for you to remember whom you have chosen. We will destroy these cards after the interview.

The interview process is straightforward, and the interview should take a 1-hour maximum. The interview is completely confidential. All information you provide will be kept on my personal laptop only. You can be completely frank in whatever you say; nothing will be traceable to you afterward.

With your permission, the interview will be recorded to make sure of a complete and accurate description of your views and to allow me to refer to when I consolidate the results. At any time, you may stop the interview, and all notes and records will be deleted immediately on your request. This research is being conducted in accordance with the Institutional Review Board at Antioch University, Ph.D., which guarantees complete confidentiality and anonymity.

Thank you once again for your help with this research. I very much look forward to meeting and working with you.

Sincerely,

J. Love Benton

## Appendix C: Repertory Grid Interview Protocol

### (In-Service Teacher Interview Process)

In a moment, I will take you through the structured interview process. First, I would like to remind you that you are here as a volunteer and are free to leave this interview at any time. In addition, the contents of this interview will remain confidential and anonymous. With your permission, the interview will be recorded.

We are going to use an approach that involves you comparing and contrasting the teaching experiences among students you teach during class instruction. This will help us identify the factors that are experienced while teaching in an urban school setting, a school that has over 70% of students who are black, economically disadvantaged, and lives in Ohio.

First, we need you to choose six teaching experiences that left a lasting impression on you. You will compare and contrast these teaching experiences in this interview. *(Cards should be labeled A, B, C, D, E, F).*

Please think of teaching experiences that left a lasting impression while in an urban classroom. The teaching experience can represent anything that occurs during classroom instructional time. This teaching experience can focus on tasks, emotions, understandings, behaviors, curriculum, interactions, etc.

On each of these six cards, please write down either the name or some way of identifying one of the six teaching experiences that you have chosen. We do not need you to provide full details of these teaching experiences so that we can identify them, just enough details for you to remember what you have chosen. We will destroy these cards after the interview.

*(Allow the participant time to write the information on each of the six cards. As the subject is filling out the flashcards, write down the column headings in the vertical columns of the protocol sheet. Do not transfer any personal information onto the protocol sheet so that the people remain anonymous)*

*It is advisable to let the interviewee know this with a comment such as: As you write down the names on the flashcards, I will be jotting them down at the head of this sheet of paper.*

I will now select groups of three from the six teaching experiences and ask you to compare and contrast them. The first group of three includes numbers A, B, and C.

*(Pull out the three cards (A, B, C) and lay them in front of the participant)*

**Considering these three teaching experiences, please think about how two of these experiences are similar, and thereby different from the third, in regard to you enabling Black students to learn?**

This triad question can be followed up by probing questions:

What do you mean by this? Why is this important to you in regard to your teaching?

How meaningful was this teaching experience?

How did this teaching experience make you feel?

How did this teaching experience impact your thoughts about teaching and learning?

*(It is important to prompt the participant until they have clearly explained the contrast that they have used to compare the three elements. Participants might find this difficult in the first instance. Write the construct on the protocol sheet and confirm with the participant that this is correct.)*

How would you define the two extremes of [the construct]?

*(e.g., if the participant has named honesty, they might suggest truthful and dishonest as the two extremes)*

If this [the extreme that the participant has named] is one extreme, what is the other?

Now, please rate these three cards in relation to [name of construct]. Please arrange them in order of how they rate according to [the construct]. You should allocate each person with a rating of between 1 and 5 with 1, meaning they are [one extreme] and 5, meaning that they are [other extremes]. You can have two people on the same rating, if necessary.

*(Allow the participant time to order the three cards and to state which number each has been allocated)*

Now please rate the other three cards on the same scale. You can change the ratings of the first three cards if need be at this point.

*(Allow the participant time to order the remaining three cards and to state which number each has been allocated. Write down the number of all six cards and any comments that he makes throughout the process).*

Please explain why you have given each learning experience this rating.

*(This process should then be repeated with different triads up to 10 triads.)*



## **Appendix D: Informed Consent Form for Research Study**

This informed consent form is for teachers of in Ohio whom we are inviting to participate in a study titled

**Name of Principle Investigator:** J. Love Benton

**Name of Organization:** Antioch University, Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Program

**Name of Project:** Culturally Collaborative Teaching: A Path toward Black student learning

***You will be given a copy of the full Informed Consent Form***

### **Introduction**

I am **J. Love Benton**; a Ph.D. candidate enrolled in the Leadership and Change program at Antioch University. As part of this degree, I am completing a research study that uncovers what inservice teachers believe about what enables Black students to learn in k-12 public education. I am going to give you information about the project and invite you to participate. You may talk to anyone you feel comfortable talking with about the project and take time to reflect on whether you want to participate or not. You may ask questions at any time.

### **Purpose of the research**

The purpose of this project is to uncover inservice beliefs about Black student learning.

### **Project Activities**

This project will involve your participation in a 60-minute face to face interview.

### **Participant Selection**

You are being invited to take part in this project because you are a teacher in Ohio, with at least 5 years of teaching experience and teach Black students in a public school system. You should not consider participation in this project if you are a current student.

### **Voluntary Participation**

Your participation in this project is completely voluntary. You may choose not to participate. You may withdraw from this project at any time. You will not be penalized for your decision not to participate or for anything of your contributions during the project. Your position as a teacher will not be affected by this decision or your participation.

### **Risks**

I do not anticipate that you will be harmed or distressed as a result of participating in this project. You may stop being in the project at any time if you become uncomfortable.

### **Benefits**

There will be no direct benefit to you, but your participation may help me to learn more about the best way to implement culturally relevant pedagogy in different school systems.

## **Reimbursements**

You will not be provided with any monetary incentive to take part in this research project.

## **Confidentiality**

All information will be de-identified so that it cannot be connected back to you. Your real name will be replaced with a pseudonym in the write-up of this project. I will be the only person with access to the list connecting your name to the pseudonym. This list, along with any tape recordings, will be kept in a secure, locked location that only I will have access to either with a key or a secure password.

## **Limits of Privacy Confidentiality**

This project involves a recorded interview. As a result, I cannot assure you that what you say will be private. At the beginning of each planning meeting, I will encourage all participants to use discretion and avoid discussing the planning team outside of the planning team process.

I will be providing a summary to the leadership when the project is completed. Your real name will not be included in this document.

Generally speaking, I can assure you that I will keep everything you tell me or do for the study private. However, there are times where I cannot keep things private (confidential). I cannot keep things private (confidential) when:

- The researcher finds out that a child or vulnerable adult has been abused
- The researcher finds out that a person plans to hurt him or herself, such as commit suicide,
- The researcher finds out that a person plans to hurt someone else,

There are laws that require many professionals to take action if they think a person is at risk for self-harm or are self-harming, harming another, or if a child or adult is being abused. In addition, there are guidelines that researchers must follow to make sure all people are treated with respect and kept safe. In most states, there is a government agency that must be told if someone is being abused or plans to self-harm or harm another person. Please ask any questions you may have about this issue before agreeing to be in the study. It is important that you do not feel betrayed if it turns out that the researcher cannot keep some things private.

## **Future Publication**

This project will not be published. Documentation of the project will only be shared internally with the Antioch University, Ph.D. in Leadership and Change Program learning community.

## **Right to Refuse or Withdraw**

You do not have to take part in this research if you do not wish to do so, and you may withdraw from the study at any time without your job being affected.

## **Who to Contact?**

If you have any questions, you may ask them now or later. If you have questions later, you may contact:

J. Love Benton at XXX

If you have any ethical concerns about this study, contact Lisa Kreeger, Ph.D., Chair, Institutional Review Board, Antioch University Ph.D. in Leadership and Change

**THE REMAINDER OF THIS PAGE INTENTIONALLY LEFT BLANK**

**DO YOU WISH TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PROJECT?**

I have read the foregoing information, or it has been read to me. I have had the opportunity to ask questions about it, and any questions I have been asked have been answered to my satisfaction. I voluntarily consent to participate in this project.

Print Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Day/month/year

**[ AUDIOTAPING ]**

I voluntarily agree to let the researcher audiotape our interview for this project. I agree to allow the use of my recordings as described in this form.

Print Name of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Day/month/year

*To be filled out by the researcher or the person taking consent:*

I confirm that the participant was given an opportunity to ask questions about the project and all the questions asked by the participant have been answered correctly and to the best of my ability. I confirm that the individual has not been coerced into giving consent, and the consent has been given freely and voluntarily.

A copy of this Informed Consent Form has been provided to the participant.

Print Name of Researcher/person taking the consent \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of Researcher /person taking the consent \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Day/month/year

### Appendix E: Assessing Reliability

<b>Collaborator</b>	1. Caring	2. Equity & Access	3. Teacher access to Professional Development	4. Trust	5. Family Relationships	6. Student Homelife and background (Trauma, family structure)	7. Teachers being supported by the school system and administrators	8. Student classroom engagement	9. Teacher Flexibility
<b>Interviewer</b>									
1. Gateways to achieving positive relationships w/students	25.01			5.02	22.01				
2. Leveraging Family Involvement									
3. Equity & Access									
4. Reflective Practices									22.05
5. Admin. Support									
6. Professional Development		6.4							
7. Kid Blaming Statements									

#### Assessing reliability, step 1 before rearrangement

Example of initial content-analysis categories of the factors that Inservice teachers believe enables Black students to learn. This example is developed in Tables 4.2 to 4.5. The reliability Table will be used to record how the interviewer and the collaborator have categorized all of the constructs. As an example, five constructs have been placed into the Table. So, for example, the interviewer has put construct 22.05 into the 'Reflective Practices' category. The collaborator seems to disagree about its meaning, having put it under the 'Teacher Flexibility' category.

## Assessing reliability, step (2) after rearrangement

<b>Collaborator</b>  <b>Interviewer</b>	1. Caring, Trust, Family Relationships	2. Teacher access to Professional Development	3. Teacher Flexibility	4. Teachers being supported by the school system and administrators	5. Equity & Access	6. Student classroom engagement
1. Gateways to achieving positive relationships w/students	25.01, 5.02, 22.01					
2. Professional and Skills Development of Staff		6.04				
3. Reflective Practice			22.05			
4. Impacts of Administrative Responsiveness and Support						
5. Equity & 6. Access						
7. Kid Blaming Statements						

1. A Discussion of the definitions showed that the interviewer's 'Gateways to achieving positive relationships w/students' category is the same as the Collaborators 'Caring, Trust, and Family Relationship' category. It also showed that the interviewers 'Reflective Practices' is the same as 'Teacher Flexibility.'

2. The categories have now been reorganized so that the commonly shared ones are at the top left of the Table. The way om which both the interviewer and collaborator have categorized the constructs is now recorded by placing constructs codes into their appropriate cells; just five examples, the same ones which appeared in Table 4.1, are shown above.
3. Constructs 25.01, 5.02, 22.01 are now placed in the interviewer's category 'Gateways to achieving positive relationships w/students. Construct 6.4 is now moved to the Professional and Skills Development of Staff.

### Assessing reliability, step 3

<b>Interviewer</b>	<b>Collaborator</b>	1. Caring, Trust, Family Relationships	2. Teacher access to Professional Development	3. Teacher Flexibility	4. Teachers being supported by the school system and administrators	5. Equity & Access	6. Student classroom engagement
1. Gateways to achieving positive relationships w/students		25.01, 5.02, 22.01, 23.04, 4.05, 10.04, 13.07, 21.03		2.07	34.6, 38.3, 28.6		31.4
2. Professional and Skills Development of Staff		19.04, 5.06	6.04, 15.05, 9.06, 5.03, 20.02, 4.03				
3. Reflective Practice				22.05, 37.07, 37.06, 22.06, 28.03, 23.02			
4. Impacts of Administrative Responsiveness and Support					25.05, 27.03, 23.03, 19.03, 4.02, 7.03, 12.01, 8.03		
5. Equity &		15.4				34.3	

Access						
6. Kid Blaming Statements						

Examples of the constructs are shown here, identified by their code number.

#### Assessing reliability, step 4

<b>Collaborator</b>  <b>Interviewer</b>	1. Caring, Trust, Family Relationships	2. Teacher access to Professional Development	3. Teacher Flexibility	4. Teachers being supported by the school system and administrators	5. Equity & Access	6. Student classroom engagement	Total
1. Gateways to achieving positive relationships w/students	8		1	3		3	15
2. Professional and Skills Development of Staff	2	6			2		10
3. Reflective Practice			8				8
4. Impacts of Administrative Responsiveness and Support		7		8			15



5. Equity & Access	1				1		2
6. Kid Blaming Statements						0	0
Total	11	13	9	11	3	3	50

Index A: Number of constructs along the diagonal for the categories agreed on, as a percentage of all the constructs in the Table:

$$8+6+6+8+1=31$$

50 constructs in total;

$$100 \times 31/50 = 62\%$$

